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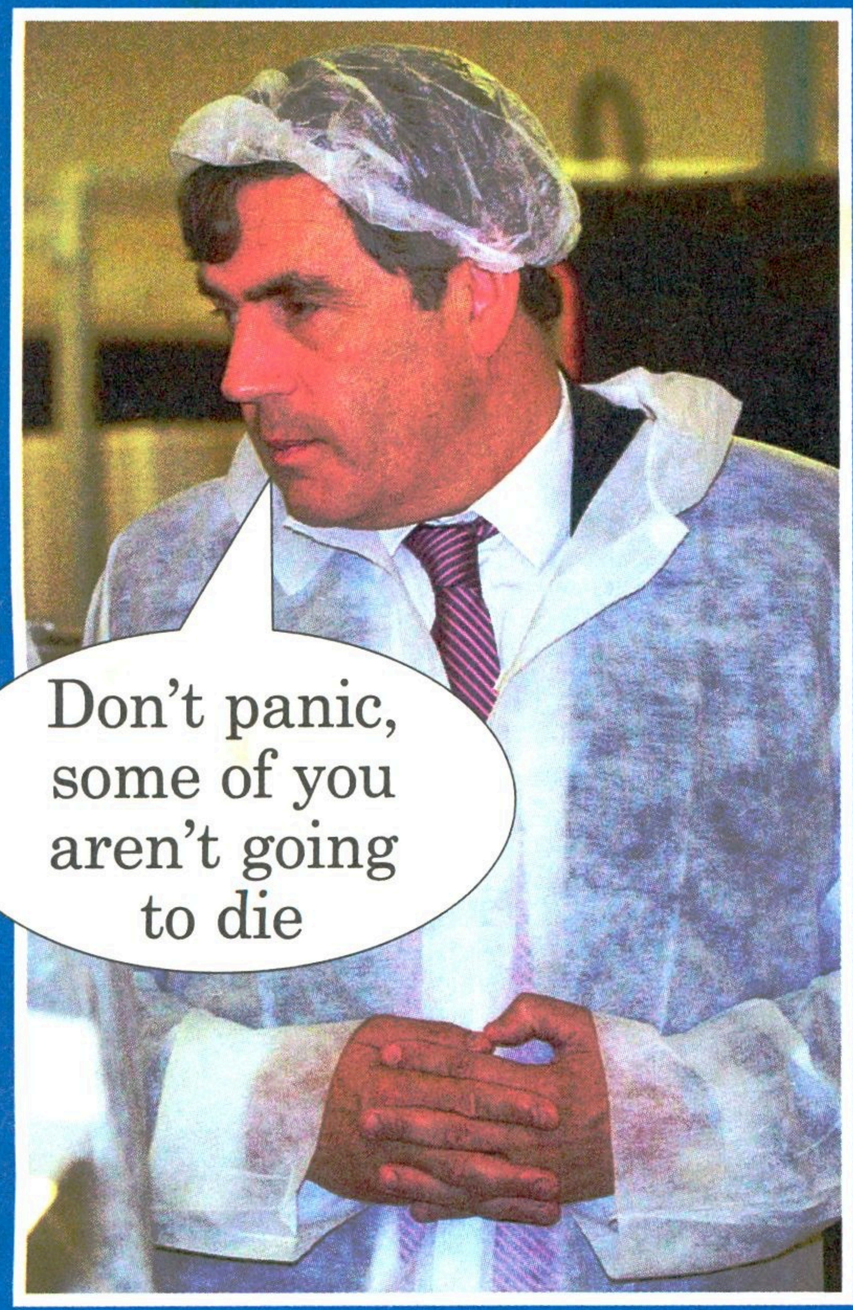

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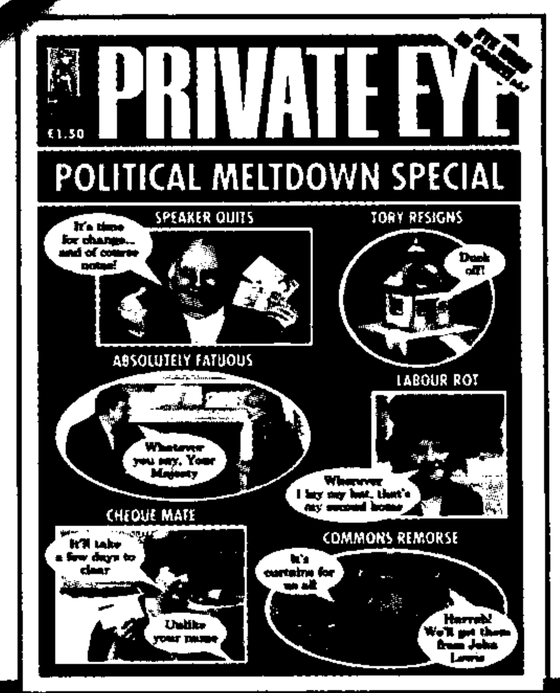

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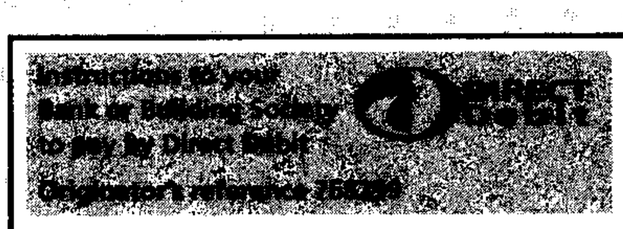

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Gnome

THE government has asked me to produce what I have described as "a draconian crackdown" on banking practices following the disastrous loss of confidence in the entire banking sytem.

As Chairman of Gnoman Sachs, with many decades of experience at the top of the financial sector, I am uniquely placed to understand the harsh but necessary measures that banks will in future be required to implement in order to restore that confidence.

1. All banks must think very long and hard before awarding senior management bonuses in excess of six figures.

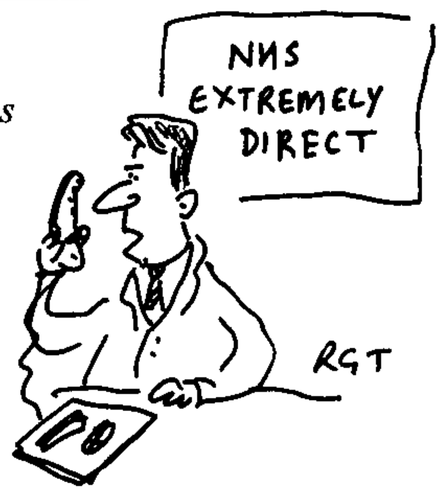
2. In order to implement the above, my guidelines lay down that if banks choose to ignore the above, then punitive sanctions will be introduced in the year 2050.

3. We must recall, however, that the payment of bonuses may give a strong and clear signal to the public that the banking sector is making a full recovery and, therefore, the most effective way to restore public confidence is to award enormous bonuses to everyone working at senior positions in the sector.

4. This should particularly apply to the government's advisers on such matters, amongst whom I am proud to number myself.

E. Strobes, pp. Lord Gnome,
(on board the Rita Chevrolet III,
Cote de Beaucoup Couleurs,
St Joseph, France)

"Of course you don't have swine flu, you ridiculous hypochondriac, now fuck off"



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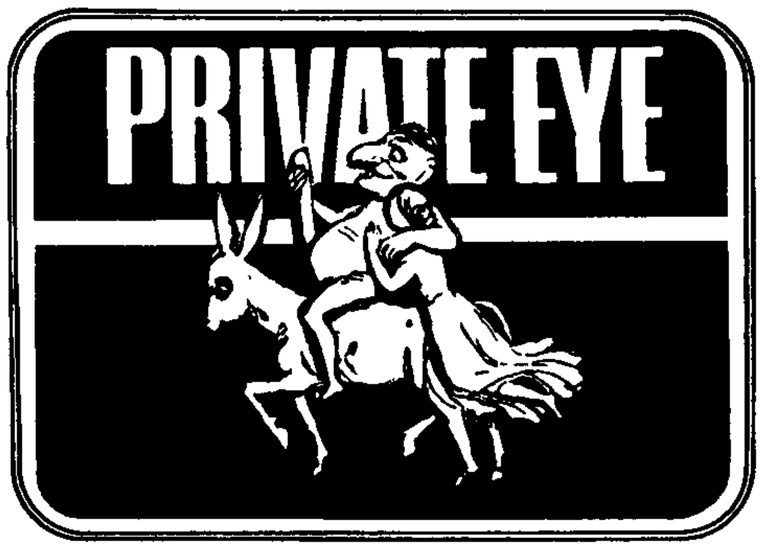

JOINED-UP GORDON

April 2007: Gordon Brown tells the *Guardian*: "I think we're moving away from this period where, if you like, celebrity matters, when people have become famous for being famous. It is a remarkable culture where people appear on television and are famous simply for the act of appearing on television… I'm not sure the public are in love with trivia."

July 2009: Published list reveals that Gordon Brown has entertained *Big Brother* presenter Davina McCall as a guest at Chequers.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

29 Total deaths in UK from swine flu at time of going to press

3-4,000 Average deaths in UK from seasonal flu each year

REFORM CLUBBED

THANKS to Gordon Brown's failure to change the way banks do business after he bailed them out, British taxpayers are in the bizarre position of funding a $1m-a-year lobbying drive in the US against President Obama's attempts to reform the banking system.

This is all down to the British public's stake in Royal Bank of Scotland, which was bailed out last October and owns the Citizens Bank Group in America.

The Citizens group is heavily exposed to credit card and home loan debt. In February it announced a $929m loss for 2008 and it may have to write off nearly $2bn in bad loans.

According to official filings obtained by *Private Eye*, between January and March this year it spent $240,000 lobbying the American Senate and House of Representatives on the US Credit Card Act of 2009 which aims to limit bad lending practices by credit card companies. Citizens also lobbied on the Tarp Reform and Accountability Act, which is designed to oblige bailed-out banks – perish the thought – to act responsibly.

Citizens is on course to spend $1m on lobbying this year, as it did in previous years. When approached by *Private Eye*, RBS declined to comment.

Flu what a scorcher!

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■ In the Courts: It's Desmond v. Bower 9
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STRAW BAILS OUT

JUSTICE secretary Jack Straw has finally been "persuaded" by Labour backbenchers led by Gordon Prentice that people who are non-resident or "non-domiciled" for tax purposes should be banned from donating money to political parties, having resisted calls for such action for years. Until now technical difficulties and insufficient parliamentary time prevented action, you understand.

Only a cynic would suggest the sudden change of heart has anything to do with the need these days to keep Old Labour lefties happy and with the drying-up of the deep well of "non-dom" money that New Labour has drawn on over the years. Now that the millions raised from such famous non-doms as Lakshmi Mittal, Sir Ronald Cohen, Lord Paul and Chai Patel are no longer forthcoming (see *Eye* 1238), the change is set to be most painfully felt by a Tory party that is regaining its traditional monopoly on appealing to wealthy businessmen.

The necessary change to the political parties and elections bill, introduced in the Lords by Labour's Dale Campbell-Savours last month, was duly voted through the Commons last week; but not until after a spat over a certain generous Tory deputy chairman, Lord Ashcroft, who would only be able to donate personally to the Conservative party if he swore that he was tax resident and domiciled in Britain. Though he promised to become a tax resident when elevated to the peerage, nine years on he stubbornly refuses to confirm his status.

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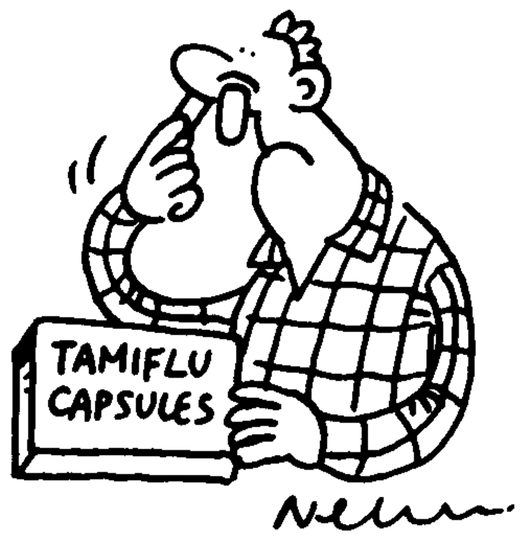
Freesheet advertisement, Peterborough

SWINE FEVER

"SWINE FLU: IT'S GETTING SERIOUS," bellowed the front page of the *Daily Mail* on 17 July.

More fool those readers who supposed that point had been reached when the paper announced "WE'RE ENTERING THE MOST DANGEROUS PHASE" (3 July), when they were told it "CANNOT BE STOPPED" (26 June), that the "PANDEMIC THREAT GROWS" (12 May), or when it was merely a "HEALTH THREAT TO GLOBAL UPTURN" way back on 28 April.

They should instead have heeded the paper's jaunty words of 5 May: "COULD CATCHING SWINE FLU ACTUALLY BE GOOD FOR YOU?"



Street of Shame

DAME Marjorie Scardino, chief executive of the *Financial Times*'s parent company, Pearson, has enlisted the help of Dan Bogler, the paper's managing editor, to try to defend her over her huge printing cock-up which will cost £30m (*Eye* 1239).

The NUJ went to Bogler after the *Eye* piece appeared, calling for an end to the job cuts which they say are only necessary to pay for Scardino's mistake. They are particularly enraged that despite what has happened she has just received a bonus of £1,017,000 on top of her £950,000 salary. In his reply Bogler claimed that the *Eye*'s account of how Richard "Dirty" Desmond managed to get the better of Scardino at his West Ferry printing plant was "muddled, as always". Not so.

Several senior *FT* hacks are now openly calling for the immediate removal of Pearson chairman Glen Moreno (for his involvement in massive tax-dodging at a bank in Liechtenstein) and Dame Marje herself. Meanwhile, times are now so hard at the *FT* that the wretched Bogler has advertised his bicycle for sale on eBay. "I was going to bid for it," says one eBay customer, "but the thought of it being so close to Mr Bogler's bottom in its previous life filled me with revulsion."

"EXCLUSIVE: Jacko's killers named", shrieked the front page of the *Daily Star* on 13 July. Some scoop indeed!

Had the paper really got the names of those Michael Jackson's "heartbroken sister La Toya" accused of his murder, given that in her interviews with the *Mail on Sunday* and *News of the World* 24 hours previously (both, curiously, billed as "World Exclusive"), she would only say she suspected "a conspiracy of people" of killing him?

Er, no. The *Star* had just copied out the best of the quotes from the day before's papers and appended them "sources have claimed." "Heartbroken La Toya says she has revealed the names to friends, family and police," hackette Gemma Wheatley clarified on page 4.

YET more scenes from a wedding: Sue Carroll of the *Mirror* made a fool of herself at Rebekah Wade's nuptials when she saw a man she believed to be Sir Stuart Rose and promptly thanked him for sending her flowers.

The man, who was in fact justice secretary Jack Straw, became rattled and, assuming that fragrant Glenda was chatting him up, started to talk loudly about his wife. Only later did Carroll realise she had not been talking to the Marks & Spencer executive chairman at all – and by that time Straw wouldn't allow her to get close enough to apologise.

But why had Sir Stuart Rose sent her flowers in the first place? Surely not as a thank you for her recent blistering *Mirror* profile of "the man who puts the spark in Marks and Spencer"?

"SORDID reality behind Dubai's gilded façade," wrote Rod Liddle in a coruscating feature on the Gulf state for the *Sunday Times* on 12 July. "Construction halted, westerners jailed for adultery – but prostitutes do well."

Liddle's unflinching candour did not go down well in one corner of the News International empire. Since 2007 the publisher of the *Times* and *Sunday Times* has been printing a daily Middle East edition in the gilded city of… Dubai.

Second mother 'too supid to raise her children'

Daily Telegraph website

HACKING-WATCH

IN HIS dramatic performance before a Commons select committee hearing on the illegal phone tapping scandal last week, *Grauniad* hack Nick Davies produced several documents which appeared to reveal further skulduggery by Murdoch hacks and executives.

There was, however, one bit of evidence he omitted. A file seized by the Information Commission from private investigator Steve Whittamore in 2003, which was later obtained by lawyers for Professional Footballers' Association boss Gordon Taylor, included a personal request for Whittamore to trace someone's address via his phone number. The request came from Rebekah Wade when she was editor of the *News of the Screws*.

Davies was asked to keep quiet about this by the man who accompanied him to the committee hearing, *Grauniad* editor Alan Rusbridger, who feared that the skirmishes between the *Grauniad* and News International would turn into all-out war if there were any mention of the flame-haired weirdo who has now become NI's chief executive.

This may also be why the *Guardian* has yet to reveal that the secret payment of £700,000 in damages and costs to buy the silence of Gordon Taylor was not a mere executive order. It was decided by the directors of News Group Newspapers Ltd, the NI subsidiary which owns the *Sun* and the *Screws*, at their board meeting on 10 June last year. If their involvement were revealed, it could cause grave embarrassment for the directors of News Group Newspapers Ltd – not least one James Murdoch.

Off the record

The cosy relationship between Rebekah Wade and the Metropolitan Police was on show, meanwhile, at the Dorchester Hotel in London last week.

Having ruled out reopening the file on the phone hacking case, senior coppers watched as the *Sun*-sponsored Police Bravery Awards were dished out on 17 July to deserving officers. At the top table, sitting with Met commissioner Sir Paul Stephenson and police troubleshooter extraordinaire, assistant commissioner John Yates, was Wade. No doubt they had lots to talk about.

Sneaky buggers

Wade may have declined to waste a single column inch in the *Sun* on the phone hacking furore, but sister paper the *Sunday Times* was not so reticent.

Jonathan Ungoed-Thomas penned a lengthy investigation into private detectives acquiring confidential information for the edition of 12 July, detailing how "selling such information to newspapers was an increasingly risky trade" and pouring scorn on a rival's most recent revelations: "The *Guardian* said there were 'thousands' of victims but produced no evidence for its extravagant claims." He even took care to point out that the Information Commissioner's investigation into the aforementioned Whittamore revealed the *Sunday Times* to be the least frequent patron of his services, with a mere four requests in two years.

Nowhere in the 2,600-word article, however, did Ungoed-Thomas find space to mention John Ford, the well-remunerated former actor who for years did the bulk of the *Sunday Times*'s dirty work, "blagging" far more confidential information on his newsdesk's behalf.

Daft Leppard

Another *Sunday Times* hack, David Leppard, meanwhile, has been threatening to bring down *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger by exposing his alleged use of private investigators to look into Monsanto years ago. This is of course the same David Leppard who was described in Nick Davies's book *Flat Earth News* as a "ruthless charlatan".

Poor Leppard had a miserable time at the recent summer party hosted by Shami Chakrabarti of Liberty, waylaying a female stranger to complain that most of the guests were ghastly *Grauniad* types. He was particularly distressed by the presence of veteran *Guardian* gumshoe David Leigh, but before he could get going the female stranger introduced herself as Jeannie Mackie – aka David Leigh's wife.

Alton glowers

"Revelations of widespread phone hacking have landed aspects of British journalism in the dock," the *Independent* observed, commenting on Nick Davies's revelations in the *Guardian*. "But is this pillorying totally justified?"

Apparently not. "We should ignore the hysteria," advised the editorial, written by editor Roger Alton. He thought it "out of proportion to the scale of the alleged breaches of privacy. There is also some score-settling going on."

Indeed so. Or was it pure coincidence that one of the editors who took the biggest pasting in Davies's book – over his stewardship of the *Observer* in the run-up to the Iraq war – was none other than Roger Alton?

Dogged by snoops?

Rod Christie-Miller, bully boy at Schillings' solicitors, is gallantly leading the fight against the eavesdroppers by advising his firm's high-profile clients how to protect their mobile phones from being hacked by seedy investigators.

But who is advising Christie-Miller? Could it be his own debt-dodging client Peter Hargitay (*Eyes passim*) and his son Stevie? Hargitay's ABI private investigation agency, safely based in Zurich, offers to conduct "covert operation assignments" with the help of "a software expert with hacker credentials".

His now defunct European Communications & Research Think Tank promised to deliver "sensitive investigative data" to clients. Hargitay has even advertised that he can investigate private bank accounts. Will Scotland Yard and the Information Commissioner now show an interest?

In the past hacks from the *Mail, Guardian, Observer* and *Telegraph* sports desks have certainly been interested in Hargitay, enthusiastically publishing his snippets, planted to divert attention from the corruption of his clients at Fifa.

FORMER *Observer* editor Donald "Pixie" Trelford took a surprisingly relaxed attitude when quizzed on the *Today* programme about revelations of phone-hacking while Andy Coulson was *News of the World* editor.

During his 50-year career, said the Pixie, newspapers regularly bent the law to get scoops and the *Screws*' behaviour needed to be seen in such a light. Furthermore, there was no new evidence showing that Coulson himself knew about the phone-hacking.

None of this changes the fact that the scandal is highly embarrassing for any organisation which heaped praise on the *Screws* during Coulson's reign – none more so than the London Press Club, which gave it the Sunday Newspaper of the Year Award for three consecutive years in 2004, 2005 and 2006. And who was chairman of the club at the time? Step forward… Donald Trelford!

JUST FANCY THAT!

News of the World reader offer

DESMOND v. BOWER

AFTER one false start and months of procedural wrangling, Richard "Dirty" Desmond's libel action against Tom Bower at last came to trial in the high court last week. The very first witness into the box was the grinning claimant himself, owner of Express Newspapers and several TV porn channels.

Desmond told the jury how he first read the brief passage in Bower's biography of Conrad Black which so appalled him that he felt obliged to sue. "I was at our house in Majorca with my wife, lying on a sun lounger reading the book. It was August 2007. I stood up and I said, 'Hang on, there's a piece about me in this book and it says I was crushed by Mr Black and that I ordered my editors and journalists to write untrue features'." He immediately asked a colleague in London to send a copy of the book to Schillings, the libel lawyers, "as I felt it was very damaging to me, and to the people that work with me".

The passage in question claimed that in the autumn of 2002 rumours had reached Desmond of a financial crisis at Black's Hollinger company. Still smarting from a legal joust with Black the previous year, over a printing plant they owned jointly, Desmond encouraged the *Sunday Express* to run a story revealing that Hollinger now faced its "biggest crisis ever" after "a credit facility was cancelled by its bankers". Black, desperate to conceal the truth of his problems, sued the paper, which eventually agreed to publish an apology. "Victory against Desmond, a tough operator, vindicated Black's remorseless pursuit of challengers," Bower wrote. "Grinding his critics into the dust had never failed."

To some readers, the point of the story might seem that *Desmond was in the right*. Why sue, then? There were three main elements in Desmond's claim: that he had been falsely accused of animosity towards Lord Black; and of abusing his position as proprietor by getting editors to attack his enemies; and of being ground into the dust by Conrad Black, who forced him to apologise for publishing the truth.

YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND

Desmond's counsel, Ian Winter QC, admitted that Black and Desmond had fought a legal battle over their jointly-owned printing works in 2001 and 2002 – but insisted that personal relations between the two men were friendly throughout. The *Express* attacked Black, and the *Telegraph* excoriated Dirty Des, but the private correspondence between Richard and Conrad showed that they rose above the fray.

In September 2001, even as the *Sunday Express* jeered at Black's new peerage – "a very grand title, and one he shares with Lords Archer, Harlech, Lucan, Kagan and any number of undistinguished folk before him" – Desmond was writing to congratulate the new lord and offer him a glass of champagne to celebrate. "Being a sometime *Express* reader," Black replied, "I note that your financial writers predict my imminent commercial disappearance, so I shall doubly look forward to having the glass of champagne you mentioned." Winter described this as a "perfectly cordial" response. In another missive, sent the following month, Desmond raised various problems he had had with Black's sidekick, Dan Colson. "Your letter," Black replied, "is the latest in a series of disagreeable surprises that has bedevilled relations between our companies." Black complained to Desmond that another of his letters was such "an outrageous farrago of nonsense" that he'd be consulting his lawyers. According to Winter, the Black-Desmond correspondence showed that relations between them were "perfectly amicable", seasoned by some "mild joshing".

Bower's counsel, Ronald Thwaites QC, was incredulous. He read out a letter in which Desmond protested at the coverage he was getting in the *Telegraph*. "You know how to use a bloody telephone," he told Black. "What's the matter? You're so short of cash you can't afford to make calls to these slanderous, libellous, malicious, horrible gits?" the letter then mentioned Colson, with whom he was dealing over the printworks: "I don't want a bloody fax from Dildo Dan telling me that I'm unreasonable."

Thwaites asked Desmond about this reference to Dan Colson:

Thwaites: What form of abuse is it? It may be unfamiliar to the jury, to give someone the first name "Dildo".

Winter (interjecting): It rhymes.

Thwaites: Mr Winter suggests it rhymes. It doesn't rhyme, actually, it is alliteration. Will you come and help us? You picked this term of abuse; what does it mean? Don't be coy, Mr Desmond. You are a man of the world.

Desmond: Peter Green. *(Bafflement in court.)*

Thwaites: Sorry?

Desmond: Peter Green.

Thwaites: Peter Green?

Desmond: A man of the world.

Thwaites: What does that mean?

Desmond: It's a song.

Thwaites: Are you going to sing it for us? It would make a pleasant diversion. Do you have a good voice?

Desmond: I don't, actually.

Thwaites: Then don't sing.

Thwaites turned instead to the libellous horrible gits, aka *Telegraph* hacks: "You are saying, 'Stop this unfounded malicious rubbish in your newspaper'." And Black had written back to reassure Desmond that "I'll take care of our journalists" – thus confirming, Thwaites suggested, "what I put to you: that you, together with Conrad Black, as proprietors could influence the content of newspapers whenever you saw fit." Not at all, Desmond said: "It is the editor's paper to edit. I run the business."

EVERYTHING I OWN

Do press barons ever use their newspapers to settle scores? "It's quite difficult to think of a more defamatory allegation to make against the proprietor of a newspaper," Ian Winter QC told the jury, gravely. To Desmond himself it was not only defamatory but incredible: "That's not how it is done… It is not acceptable, absolutely not."

So, Thwaites asked, if a proprietor used his newspaper to attack his enemies, he would deservedly have a bad reputation? "He would," Desmond agreed. "But I don't believe any owner does that."

Anil Bhoyrul, who wrote no fewer than 27 hostile pieces about Conrad Black in his "Media Uncovered" column for the *Sunday Express* between September 2001 and May 2003 – including the one over which Black sued – was called as a witness on behalf of Desmond. "Did you know the likes and dislikes of Mr Richard Desmond when you started writing articles for him?" Bower's QC enquired. "Not when I started," Bhoyrul said. But he "got a fairly good sense of that as time passed" because of comments from *Sunday Express* editor Martin Townsend. "Every Sunday the column would come out and I would speak to Martin usually on a Tuesday, and he would tell me, 'Richard liked the column this week', or didn't like it." With Townsend's guidance, "I got a pretty good feel for who, you know, to be positive about and who to be negative about. The impression I got over time was that Conrad Black and Richard Desmond were not the best of friends."

On 27 October 2002 the *Sunday Telegraph* published a full-page article under the headline "Desmond Laid Bare". One week later the *Sunday* Express ran its full-page attack on the *Telegraph* owner, which was trailed on the front page of the business section as "Conrad Black Laid Bare." But according to Martin Townsend there was "no linkage" between the two pieces, no tit-for-tat retaliation. "It is a complete coincidence, apart from the phrase 'laid bare' caught my eye and I stole it for the following week. That's it."

Besides, why would Desmond wish to avenge himself for the *Telegraph* piece? He assured the court that nothing in "Desmond Laid Bare" had offended him. Thwaites seemed surprised: didn't it refer to him as a pornographer? "No, I don't believe so." Thwaites pointed out that the p-word appeared in the sub-headline, and several more times in the piece – much of which was about the profits from his satellite channels. "Is association with or label of 'pornography' something you find offensive or not?" "Yes," Desmond agreed.

Desmond also denied on oath that he had a grudge against Jafar Omid of Pentagon Capital Management, with whom he had invested £50,000 on behalf of his son. When Pentagon's business was suspended last year, Omid explained that he couldn't repay the money instantly – as Desmond demanded – because he was legally bound not to give preferential treatment to one investor over another. On Monday this week, the court heard the tape of a phone conversation on 10 July 2008 in which Desmond warned that if Omid didn't send a cheque at once, "we're not gonna be friends... I'm the worst fucking enemy you'll ever have". Three days later, the *Sunday Express* ran a libellous full-page attack on Omid and Pentagon, prompted by comments Desmond made in the hearing of the paper's editor.

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

What he found just as offensive was the idea that the *Express* had apologised to Conrad Black for printing the truth about his "biggest crisis ever". So, adding to the slightly head-spinning nature of the trial, Desmond kept denying that his newspaper had published a story which was largely correct while Bower's side maintained that it had, even if more by luck than judgement.

Allow Ian Winter QC to explain. "As a businessman, Mr Desmond on a daily basis has to deal with people, negotiate with people, come to agreements with people. If those people believe that despite having this tough reputation, he's actually a wimp and can be ground into the dust really very easily, and can be made to say sorry for publishing things that actually are true all along, if they were to think that about him, it is very damaging."

This, Ronald Thwaites QC suggested to the jury, was what the case came down to. "You may have wondered, as Mr Winter was solemnly telling you how serious a matter this is and how it affects his business relations with other businessmen who think that he can be put upon, what on earth is it all about? What's he talking about? Then we have the answer, members of the jury, and it came from Mr Winter and it's really very simple. Mr Desmond is here because he wants to tell the world that he is not a wimp: 'I am not a wimp. Have you got that? I'm Richard Desmond, owner of four newspapers'."

● The case continues. For the full story, see the next *Eye*.

EXPERIENCED
BARRISTER
REQUIRED
For espresso bar opening soon in Truro.
Contact Steve at Fodders Restaurant
West Briton Classified

END OF THE PEER SHOW

IT HASN'T been a great year for the Upper House. For the first time in 300 years, peers have been suspended for corruption (Labour lords Truscott and Taylor in the so-called "cash for influence" affair), and now Inspector Knacker is investigating at least four more Labour peers for allegedly fiddling their allowances.

Scotland Yard has not been brought in at the insistence of any of the three major parties. The police intervention is the work of the Scottish National Party, aided by a most unlikely whistle-blower.

Angus Robertson, the SNP leader at Westminster, complained initially about just one Labour peer, Baroness Uddin. She had claimed approximately £100,000 in overnight allowances by registering an unused flat in Maidstone as her main home. Everyone assumed her principal residence was the big house in Wapping where her family lives – but no, she said, this was simply a pied- a-terre, allowing her to be close to parliament.

The same ruse was used by Baroness Thornton, a government whip and health spokesman. Since 2002, Thornton, a big chum of Cherie Blair's, has pocketed £130,000 in overnight allowances claiming her big house in Belsize Park – where her family lives and near her children's school – is simply a place allowing her to attend the House. Her "main home" is a poky little bungalow in Shipley, Yorkshire, solely occupied by her mother. It may be difficult for her to persuade Knacker that she hasn't broken the 2007 Fraud Act.

Even more cut and dried, it seems, is the case of Lord Clarke of Hampstead, a former Labour party chairman, who has at least admitted he "fiddled" his expenses by claiming for overnight stays in town, when in fact he drove home to St Albans each time. Others possibly in the frame include former party general-secretary Lord (Larry) Whitty and Tory former acting BBC chairman, Lord Ryder.

Initially, Angus Robertson had only intended to refer a complaint about Uddin to Knacker – that is, until a whistle-blower handed an intermediary a handwritten list naming other peers who should be subject to police investigation. Who could this public-spirited person be? Step forward none other than Baroness Uddin of Bethnal Green!

"Have you had close contact with a swine, Mrs Blair?"

CALLED TO ORDURE

JOHN LYON, parliamentary commissioner for standards, made a rare public appearance the other day. So what was he like? An Eliot Ness de nos jours? Hardly. A swine flu-stricken mouse might have been more assertive.

If anyone accuses an MP of breaking the Commons code of conduct, Lyon is the person who decides whether or not to take matters further. In most cases he prefers "not to". This is the so-called sleazebuster who was so slow to investigate the then home secretary Jacqui Smith's expenses and allowances. He also waved through Keith Vaz's relationships with controversial solictor Shahrokh Mireskandari after Vaz gave him "assurances" there was nothing amiss. So that's all right, then.

So reclusive has this £108,000-a-year commissioner been that Fleet Street picture editors had no photographs of him. His public utterances were nil. Despite having been commissioner since January 2008, he had the profile of an old-fashioned head of MI6. So when he appeared before Sir Christopher Kelly's standards in public life committee during its inquiry into MPs' expenses, it was interesting simply to see what the bloke looked like, let alone to hear what he had to say.

Late middle aged, bespectacled and nervous, he took his place at the witness table in Church House and deposited his black, chunky briefcase with almost Mr Bean-ish care. Out came some paperwork which he patted. He fiddled with his pen, then looked up at the committee: "I'm conscious of the time. Let's crack on, shall we?"

Sir Christopher Kelly asked: "Is your role sufficiently strong? I'm not talking about you personally but about the position." Lyon bent forward, as though craning for mercy. He said yes, the standards commissioner had sufficient powers. He had always been given the resources he needed. "I feel I have achieved independence," he claimed.

"Your predecessor didn't," said Sir Christopher drily.

Lyon: "There has been no interference with me. I wouldn't allow it!"

Sir Christopher noted that although the standards commissioner can investigate alleged misdeeds by MPs, he can not decide punishments. That is left to MPs on the standards and privileges committee. Sir Christopher wondered if this inability to pass sentence was a weakness? "No," said Lyon. "It is a strength." It would be "quite wrong" for the commissioner to have any role in deciding punishments. "But I do have some responsibility. I produce the memorandum.".

Though any evidence in his memoranda was "really, really important" and resources were "really important" too, strong punishment of MPs was less urgent a concern. For example, he was unfussed that Derek Conway, the Tory MP whose abuse of public money kickstarted the expenses scandal, had only been given a two-week suspension. Lyon felt it was quite enough. After all, Conway had lost his reputation.

Sir Christopher suggested that in other jobs, Conway would have been "sacked immediately". Lyon assumed an expression of saintly disdain and indicated that sackings were most undesirable.

Sir Christopher wondered if it might be an idea for a commissioner to have the power to open investigations without waiting for a complaint from the public. Would that not have been a good idea in the past? Might it not have prevented the expenses abuses? "I don't want to get into might-have-beens," said Lyon. Sir Christopher: "I do."

Members of the Kelly committee pressed Lyon for his thoughts on some of the blatant abuses of the MPs' £10,000 a year communications allowance. "I hope you will forgive me if I do not mention individual cases," he quavered. But isn't that supposed to be his job?

Elizabeth Vallance, one of Kelly's colleagues, observed tartly: "You have carved out quite a limited view of your own role." She seemed to be saying that he was feeble. Lyon did not necessarily demur.

Lyon insisted quietly he had not been leaned on to come to conclusions during his investigations. Believe that if you like, but it was certainly not true of his predecessor Elizabeth Filkin. She made the mistake of being rather too energetic in her job – investigating the likes of John Prescott and John Reid. She was duly jemmied out by MPs horrified at her independence. We can confidently predict that establishment stooge Lyon will not be repeating her mistake.

'Gavel Basher'

WOMAN IN THE EYE

GILL RIDER

THE award of a £400m 10-year contract to design and produce the new biometric passports to money-printer De La Rue last month marks another step in the firm's growing closeness to government.

The firm already has one of its directors, former Accenture management consultant Gill Rider, in the heart of Whitehall at the Cabinet Office, where she runs "human resources" across the civil service and is also responsible for its "programme management" work, which covers big projects such as ID cards and biometric passports.

When Rider was appointed to the government back in 2006, she was warned about the conflicts of interest that might arise from her non-executive De La Rue position, now worth £43,000 a year, and her ownership of millions of pounds' worth of Accenture shares to supplement her civil service salary (£190,000 to £195,000 in 2007-08).

She reassured mandarins she would remove herself from discussions involving these companies, and she stepped down from the De La Rue board for four months ahead of the biometric passport decision, returning as soon as it was made. Rider was also told by cabinet secretary Gus O'Donnell to make sure that the time commitment didn't present a problem, so presumably preparing for and attending 20-plus De La Rue board meetings each year can be accomplished out-of-hours.

Any dip in performance from the woman who as head of Accenture's energy consultancy in the 1990s proposed liberalising Europe's energy markets and teamed up with, ahem, Enron to offer "energy trading solutions" ought to be picked up by the rigorous civil service "capability" programme. And who's in charge of this? Yep, Gill Rider.

Rider's mixed responsibilities require her to be nothing if not flexible. While enforcing pay restraint across Whitehall, she chairs the De La Rue remuneration committee that has just awarded the outgoing chief executive a £1.225m bonus (300 percent of his salary) and a £677,000 pay-off, and a £129,000 bonus (150 percent of pro rata salary) to his successor for just three months' work.

MORE on those searching tax investigations by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) into MPs – such as they are.

As reported in *Eye* 1239, the number of MPs facing enquiries into their tax returns, which would include the most trivial query, has fallen in recent years to just 32 last year. But even these, the *Eye* has now learnt, barely scratch the surface of the dubious expense claims and un-receipted allowances that have been pocketed by hundreds of honourable members.

Of 32 investigations, 22 resulted in further tax to pay of between £0 and £999 (apparently giving the actual amounts would have compromised MPs' anonymity!); five of between £1,000 and £1,999; and another five of up to £5,999.

If this is all that has been recovered – and it will include extra tax due on income or disallowed expenses unrelated to parliamentary duties - it looks as if the taxman has simply accepted that payments cleared by parliament's fees office weren't taxable, despite their vast divergence from the tax rules for allowable expenses.

Not that you would have guessed this from the appearance of HMRC boss Dave Hartnett before the inquiry by standards commissioner Christopher Kelly into MPs' expenses a fortnight ago when Hartnett claimed: "We are testing all the time the expenses of members of parliament, as we do for other groups of people." Yeah, right.

TOUGH times at the Ministry of Justice, where the search for £70m budget savings already means cutbacks in the number of probation officers and courts working longer days. But at least staff at the new HQ should be comfy.

A written parliamentary answer from justice secretary Jack Straw reveals that the ministry spent more than £6m on furniture for the new offices at 102 Petty France. That figure doesn't include the £170,000 spent on fancy artworks, including a £53,000 series of coloured staircase panels and a £42,000 sculpture for the atrium, revealed earlier this year.

With 3,300 MoJ staff in the refurbished offices, that would be £1,818-worth of furniture each. But they don't even get a desk each for that money, since "flexible workspace arrangements" (aka hot-desking) mean there are only enough desks for four-fifths of the ministry to be in work at once.

"I HAVE no regrets except the fact funding for freedom of information has not kept pace with the large amount of activity that it has generated," announced outgoing information commissioner Richard Thomas this month. "That is where my successor will have to act where I have perhaps not been successful."

One funding area where Thomas was extremely successful, however, was his salary. The audited accounts of the information commissioner's office reveal that he received a backdated pay increase in the year to April 2009 which swelled his salary from £100,000 to £180,000.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

1 wedding of *Sun* editor and future News International chief exec Rebekah Wade which Gordon Brown found time to attend this summer

8 funerals or repatriations of soldiers killed in Afghanistan in a single week which Gordon Brown did not find time to attend

WITH the European Union poised to impose tough regulation on the private equity industry – to the chagrin of financial services minister Lord Myners – there was panic when a study published at the end of June by Nottingham University's Centre for Management Buy-Outs (CMBO) revealed that of 108 private equity investments sold in the first three months of 2009, 75 percent were offloaded because they went bust.

The figures exposed the riskiness of private equity and its vulnerability in a downturn – exactly why the EU and others propose to introduce greater openness to the shadowy business. Helpfully a couple of weeks later the same CMBO dusted off some old unpublished research that the *FT* could report under the headline: "Private Equity deals are 'not riskier'", adding: "This finding could provide a boost for private equity's push to persuade regulators that it is not a risky form of ownership, as it wrestles with proposals for a legislative clampdown on the industry in Brussels and Washington."

Only some way down did it emerge that private equity deals are no riskier than others once the effect of "leverage", ie sky-high borrowing, is adjusted for. Which is like saying smoking is safe once adjusted for the effects of inhaling: leverage is the whole point of private equity, as it's the tax-deductible way to ramp up the lightly-taxed returns in the good times – none of which find their way to the low-paid employees who get laid off when things go pear-shaped later on.

PS: The amenable Nottingham academics, it so happens, are funded by Barclays Private Equity.

O·B·N

"Bradshaw, perhaps thanks to his fitness regime, looks 10 years younger than his real age. His chestnut hair has not a fleck of grey. He remains whippet thin and sports an impressive – and seemingly natural – tan. He has regularly featured on lists of the most 'fanciable' MPs, while female Commons staffers can often be heard sighing that they wish he was not gay."

Jonathan Oliver on culture secretary Ben Bradshaw, Sunday Times News Review

Submitted by Ray Butler

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

POLICE 5

"THE disclosure of significant differences between what a chief constable is said to earn and what he actually receives creates an element of murkiness in a public service that should be transparent," Andy Hayman, former Scotland Yard assistant commissioner, argues in the *Times*.

"The salaries of police chiefs are set by the Police Negotiating Board, based on the difficulties and challenges of each post across the country. But the addition of fringe benefits to those salaries is eroding the differentials."

And who better to comment on elements of murkiness and fringe benefits in the police force than Andy Hayman? The ex-Knacker quit the Met last year after it was announced that an auditors' inquiry was combing over £15,000 of credit-card bills he had claimed on expenses, including drinks with colleagues and foreign trips with a female police sergeant.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

EUROCRATS in Brussels have become extremely cagey about the judgment of Germany's highest court on the recycled EU constitution, aka the Lisbon Treaty.

There was much backslapping when the court said the treaty complied with Germany's basic law, and so could be adopted by the EU's biggest country. But relief gave way to panic when closer analysis of the complex judgment showed that it severely curbs any notion of a federal Europe.

According to the German judges, the European parliament is not a parliament in any proper sense (surprise!), and this is a "structural democratic deficit" which prevents further EU integration. The judges also note that German law "prohibits the transfer [to the EU] of competence to decide on its own competence". In other words, the European commission must stop empire-building.

Most damning of all for commission president José Manuel Barroso is that the German judges have decreed that Germany's highest court should be able to overturn judgments of the European court of justice if they are not in line with national law. As the EU edifice is based on EU law having primacy in certain areas, this would seem to question the entire European project. Barroso has said he will respond to the judgement "at a certain point". More fudge, anybody?

MOON MISSION

WHEN football's World Peace Cup begins in Spain on Friday, at least the contenders can count on having God on their side.

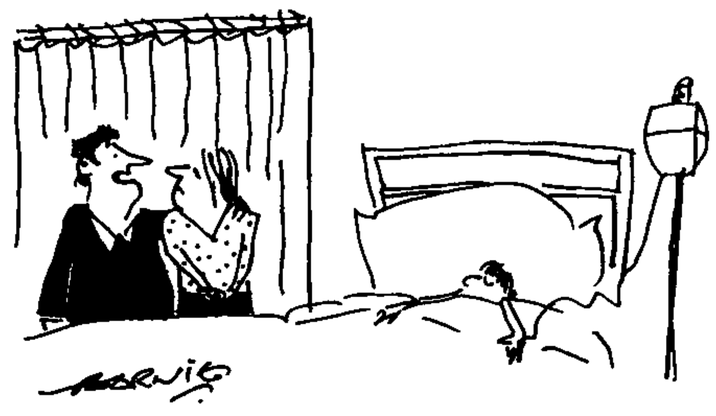
The event, featuring Aston Villa, Juventus, Real Madrid and others, has been created and fostered by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, the founder of the Unification Church who has often confused himself with the deity.

At the core of Moon's front organisations is the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), which is hosted in the UK parliament by such luminaries as Labour peer Tarsem King. Moon also owns the voice of conservatism in the US capital, the *Washington Times*.

Organisations like the UPF often keep the right-wing Moon far in the background, which is presumably why left Labour MP Kelvin Hopkins agreed to speak on the platform at its last House of Lords meeting, or Jonathan Fryer, chair of the Liberal International Group, at its House of Commons event.

Moon and his wife are known as "True Parents" in the church. As the Moon-owned news service UPI reported: "On 25 December 2001, at high noon, a meeting was held in heaven between Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, Mohammad and Shankara (founder of the Advaita Vedanta in Hinduism). Sitting with them were 600 representatives of the five leading religions… they adopted a resolution that says… Reverend Moon is the 'Savior, Messiah, Second Coming and True Parent of all humanity'… God signed on to the resolution later with a letter proclaiming Moon to be his beloved son."

Moon would like to merge the US and the UN and run them both through his religious fronts. Isn't it perhaps time for politicians, players, prelates and others to blow the whistle on his game?



"Don't blame yourself, darling. How were you to know that 'Mr Peanut's Nutty Peanut Brittle (now even more nuts for a nutty taste you'll go nut for)' contained nuts?"

TV

The Street (BBC1)
Freefall (BBC2)
Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11 (ITV1)
The Bill (ITV1)

DURING the crisis of cash and confidence afflicting British TV, the only optimistic note has been heard from the occasional industry veteran – controller of this or director of that in the sixties or seventies – in the *Media Guardian* who twitters (in the old sense) that, whatever the enemies of telly want to say, the programmes are still in tremendous shape.

The schedules do seem to offer some ammunition for this hopeful analysis from Sir Thing or Thingy, OBE – especially in drama, which has traditionally been TV's canary down a coalmine because it costs more per hour than any other genre. Last week alone, there was the return of the BBC series that has won more awards than any in recent decades, plus the debut of a single play – that form often declared extinct – by one of TV's most acclaimed writer-directors. Even on ITV, which has just sent arts out into the dark, there's an expensive and ambitious drama-documentary.

Unfortunately, though, each of these signs of health in the system turns out, on closer examination, to be a symptom of terrible decline.

Take **The Street**, the drama set around a Mancunian terrace, created by Jimmy McGovern (*Cracker*, *Hillsborough*), who stands with Paul Abbott (*State of Play*, *Shameless*) as one of the two geniuses of modern populist TV. Two series have brought two Baftas, two Emmys and an RTS award – an astonishing strike rate of gongs. The system of changing the central character each week means that big-name actors are lining up to star: the third series has Bob Hoskins and Anna Friel following Jim Broadbent, Timothy Spall and others. By series four, there was a fair chance Helen Mirren and Johnny Depp would be on board.

Except there won't be a fourth series. Although transmitted by the BBC, which has a pretty secure income, *The Street* was produced, under a pretty standard post-deregulation arrangement, by ITV. It's true that 20 years ago *The Street* would simply have been on ITV, but you can't have everything and this seemed the best of both worlds, combining the production skills of ITV with the scheduling possibilities of BBC1. Until – to save money – ITV pretty much closed down its drama unit, except for *Coronation Street*. ITV insists McGovern could have continued with a lower-budget version – *The House?* – but, like Melvyn Bragg, he decided not to collaborate in vandalism. So *The Street* has become a dead end.

The Beeb, though, has every reason to feel smug. The night after *The Street* returned, BBC2 screened **Freefall**, a new piece by one of the few writers whose mantelpiece buckles as heavily with trophies as McGovern's. Dominic Savage, whose earlier successes include *Nice Girl* and *When I Was 12*, creates hyper-naturalistic, semi-improvised plays, usually dealing with the economic underclass. So the credit crunch was the perfect subject for him and he duly turned in a slightly schematic but searing and amazingly acted tableau stretching from the council-flat mugs tricked into a sub-prime mortgage to the sky-scraper wanker-banker who has built the pyramid of greed.

Trebles all round, then. Except that the corporation seemed oddly reluctant to show a work that will almost certainly bring Savage yet more awards. *Freefall* was expected to transmit in January: a related puff-piece even ran in *The Observer* at that time. There were then hints of a spring transmission but these receded and there were rumours that it might never be shown at all. The problem, apparently, was a feeling that MPs' expenses and then swine flu eclipsed the economic story and that it might have "missed its moment", leaving doubt about where it would "sit" in the schedule. What bollocks. Anyone living in the real world could tell them that there is going to be a very long memory of what the bankers did and it will certainly have survived to July.

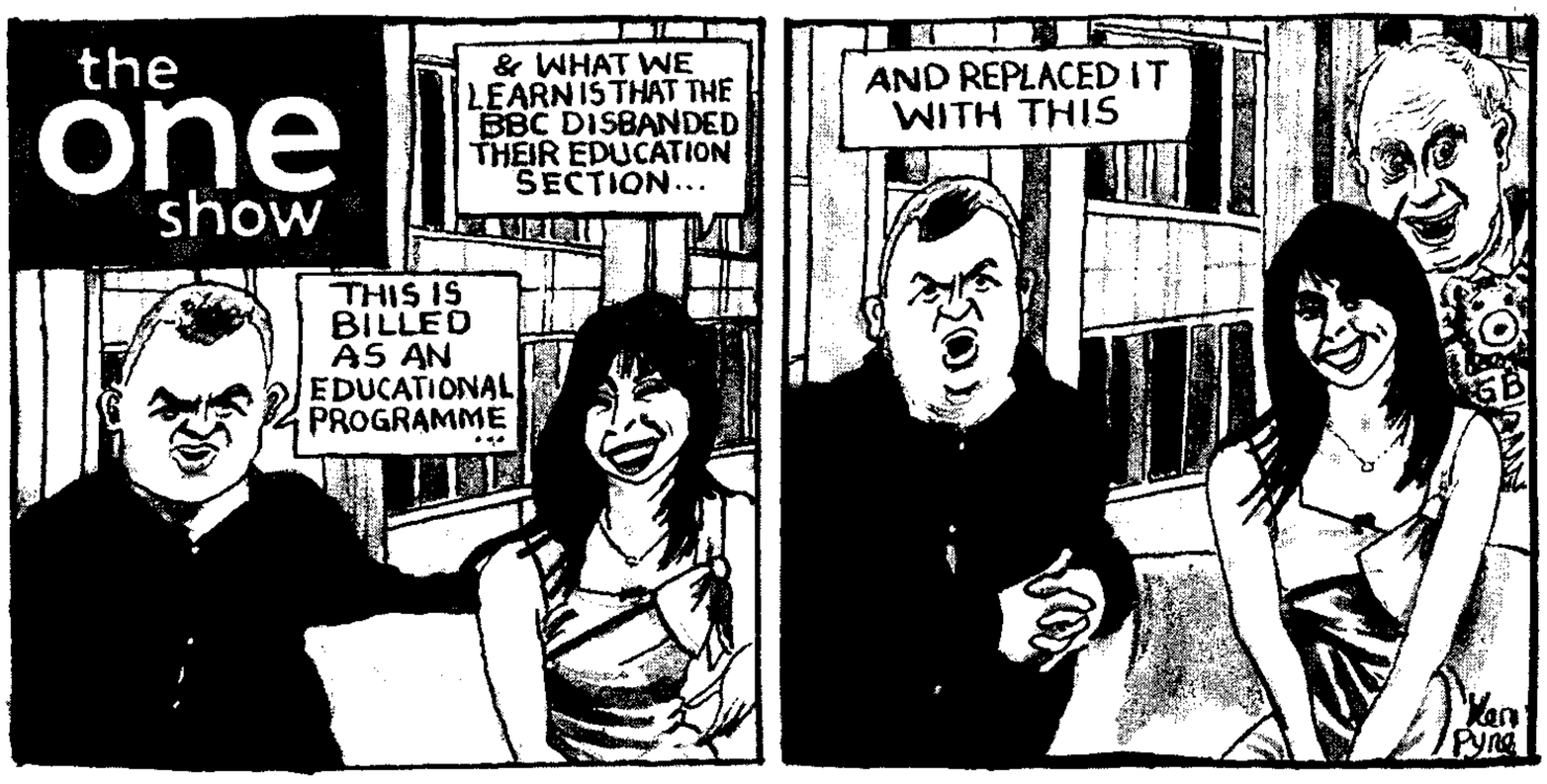
Still, *Freefall* is relatively lucky. Over at ITV, some high-profile dramas really don't go out at all. *An Englishman in New York*, the sequel to the Quentin Crisp classic *The Naked Civil Servant*, has been touted for around 18 months and John Hurt has already discussed his return to the role in several interviews. It has been included in at least two ITV press launches of forthcoming programmes but has not been seen and is now said to have no planned transmission date.

Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11 was fortunate enough to have an anniversary peg, which makes it difficult for ITV to dither. A drama marking the 40th anniversary of the Moon landings either goes out in July 2009, never or, possibly, 2019 for the 50th. ITV opted for now but, astonishingly, gave the film a start time of 10.50pm, when even three years ago it would clearly have started at 9pm or even 8pm. But this is the way things have now gone. With ITV defining itself as an entertainment network, its dramas now face being unseen or scarcely noticed.

You'd think, though, that things would be better for popular drama, but no. **The Bill**, after 20 years' service as a twice- or thrice-weekly soap, has had its budgets and episode numbers slashed and moves this week to a 9pm slot, which feels like the penultimate thump of a truncheon to the head.

Whatever Sir Thing says, things are not better than they look in British television. They're worse.

'Remote Controller'


the one show
& WHAT WE LEARN IS THAT THE BBC DISBANDED THEIR EDUCATION SECTION...
THIS IS BILLED AS AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME...
AND REPLACED IT WITH THIS
Ken Pyne

MEDIA NEWS

THE BBC's payment of £45,000 to Muhammad Abdul Bari, general secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain, marks another great victory for the corporation's legal department.

The unreserved apology offered by the corporation for opinions aired on *Question Time* in March was made without consulting the man from whose mouth they came, *Spectator* and *Telegraph* columnist Charles Moore, who learned last month that a humiliating climbdown was pending, not from the BBC itself but via a phone call from the *Daily Mail*.

No doubt this blow for media freedom will be as enthusiastically trumpeted by Dr Bari's lawyers, Carter-Fuck, as was the £75,000 of licence-payer's cash they managed to extract from the corporation two years ago for the monstrous suggestion (as previously made in countless other accounts, including several books by Downing Street colleagues) that Marcia Williams, Lady Falkender, might have had a hand in the resignation honours list of Harold Wilson.

That allegation – made in BBC Four drama *The Lavender List* – was, like Moore's comments, passed for broadcast by the BBC's lawyers without demur. And that settlement, too, was brokered without the knowledge or consent of the screenwriter and *Eye* hack responsible for the alleged libel, Charles Moore's former line-dancing partner, Francis Wheen.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£142.50 Cost of TV licence which TV's Charles Moore refuses to pay until BBC sacks Jonathan Ross

£58.90 Cost to public of "business lunch" BBC boss Mark Thompson bought TV's Charles Moore to discuss this

£45,000 Cost to public of legal payout by BBC for remarks made by TV's Charles Moore on *Question Time*

"PEAK-TIME repeats on BBC Two at an all-time high," the *Daily Telegraph* complained on 15 July, after publication of the Beeb's annual report.

"The corporation has come under pressure in recent years for showing repeats of popular shows... Almost half of BBC Two's Christmas schedule last year – from 20 December to 2 January – was made up of repeats and old films."

Appalling: how dare the BBC try to compete with the *Telegraph*? For at the very same time the *Sunday Telegraph*'s own *Seven* magazine has been offering "vintage Beeb" programmes on CD, urging readers to "recapture a slice of the past" for just £5.86 per album!

NUMBER CRUNCHING

6.4m People who watched *Big Brother* presenter Davina McCall on BBC1's *Who Do You Think You Are?* last week

2m People who watched *Big Brother* on Channel 4 at the same time

AS PART of its "ongoing commitment to openness", the BBC finally published details of the lavish pay, perks and pension pots enjoyed by its top executives.

But the Beeb is less keen to share details of the numbers of junior staff "acting up": in other words, doing jobs that would normally be done by more senior, experienced staff but without any extra pay. Hundreds of BBC staff routinely "act up" as the corporation sheds more senior broadcast journalists as part of its "Value for Money" purge.

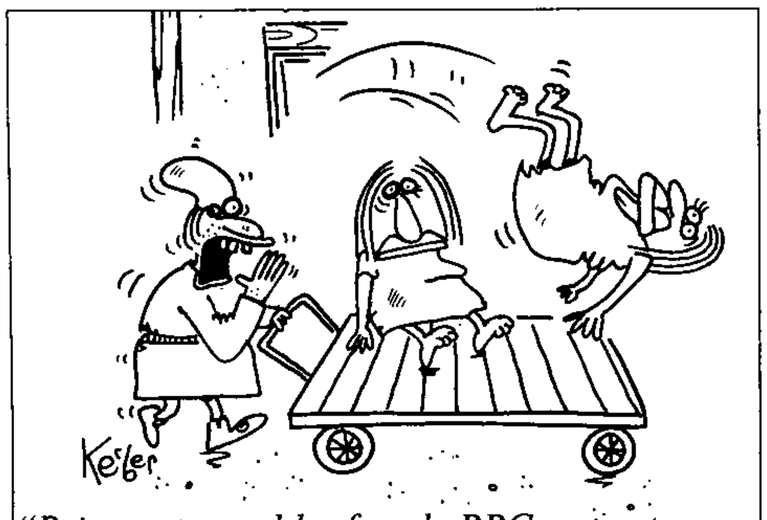
The savings are considerable. Staff "acting up" are asked to work longer shifts, take more responsibility for programmes – sometimes beyond their capabilities – in an "informal" arrangement that does not require the BBC to pay them the equivalent wage of the person they are replacing. Nor is the BBC required to offer them a promotion to the higher grade when the attachment ends.

HOW TV JOURNALISM WORKS

"Looking for people with Swine Flu today. Have you got it? Fancy doing a quick chat over the phone with Sky News? Tweet me. *About 4 hours ago.*"

"Getting lots of interesting new followers, but none with Swine Flu yet. Have you got it? Tweet me. *About 3 hours ago.*"

"I'm still hoping to speak to people confused by Swine Flu advice. Come on Tweeters. Message me. *About 22 minutes ago.*" – *"Tweets" by Paul Brennan, reporter, Sky News, 20 July*



"Bring out yer older female BBC presenters...

IT COULD be the end of an era for the BBC's very own *Pravda*, aka in-house newspaper *Ariel*.

"I would have liked to introduce you to my successor," editor Andrew Harvey writes in his valedictory editorial, "but no one has yet been appointed or the job even advertised." Instead the Beeb is holding a "consultation" over the summer as it considers just publishing online to save costs for more important measures such as, er, Alan Yentob's expense account.

Harvey pleads: "We are print in a digital world and we hope you like it that way… Whatever happens to *Ariel*, it has been a privilege to edit the paper that first appeared in 1936 and to keep it alive and lively in the 21st century."

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1
Anne Robinson: Which 19th-century chemist was invited to join the Royal Society after discovering the anaesthetic properties of nitrous oxide?
Contestant: Boots.

Are You Smarter Than A Ten-Year-Old, Sky One
Noel Edmonds: What is a 12-sided solid figure called?
Contestant: Well, I know ten sides is a hexagon. Or is it one of those tetra-somethings?

Wogan's Perfect Recall, C4
Terry Wogan: What colour is created by mixing red and yellow?
Contestant 1: Green.
TW: No, red and yellow.
Contestant 2: Blue.

GOING LIVE

SKY NEWS knew just who to ask for an informed comment on the interim report on bank governance – former HBOS executive Paul Moore.

"I haven't read the details because I have been stuck in the middle of nowhere in Spain," revealed the financial wizard.

No such problem for a professional newshound like Sky's crime correspondent Martin Brunt, who brought viewers the latest on the story of a paramedic charged with murder and abuse: "We don't know all the details – in fact, very few of them."

At least Katie Stallard knew what was happening at Wootton Bassett, several hours before the latest cortege from RAF Lyneham was due to arrive. When the Sky News anchor asked: "Have the crowds started gathering yet?", Stallard, standing in an empty street, replied: "Not yet, no."

"MODEL Kirsten Varley posed naked on a Channel 4 show – at LUNCHTIME," shrieked the *Sun* on 9 July, in full maiden-aunt mode.

"She sparked a storm after appearing completely nude for 30 minutes in a variety of poses. A studio audience and viewers were encouraged to draw her… [in] the 12.30pm programme *Life Class*. Dozens of viewers bombarded their switchboard saying it was PORNOGRAPHY."

Naturally, the paper illustrated this shocking news with an enormous picture of the naked Kirsten on page 33 – allowing readers of all ages to compare and contrast it with the artistic study of "Peta, 22, from Essex" and "Rosie, 19, from Middlesex", displaying precisely twice as much flesh on page 3.

MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

THE death of Michael Jackson has had unexpected repercussions in the world of classical music, not least for the Finchley Children's Music Group.

The group is an ensemble best known for singing Benjamin Britten or Peter Maxwell Davies but not above dipping a toe into snazzier waters – in the past it has backed Madonna in some of her less "adult" repertoire. And it was booked for every one of the 50 concerts Jackson was due to give at the O2 – which, at £1,000 a time, were set to provide the biggest financial boost the choir had had in years.

The bookings hadn't been signed or sealed yet, so the cancellation means the choir gets nothing. But the fact that the gigs are not going ahead will come as a relief to some of the choir's mothers, who had mixed feelings about the project. Michael Jackson, children... even with a small squadron of chaperones it didn't sound like a great idea.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

AD NAUSEAM

A TIDAL wave of greenwash is engulfing Britain's billboards as rival energy companies compete for the tag of who is doing the most to save the planet.

Friday 10 July was declared "Green Britain Day" by EDF, with green Union Jacks adorning posters nationwide and the masthead of the *Metro* freesheet going green. You had to admire EDF's cheek – it's a French company that runs both nuclear and coal-fired power stations.

Even so, its rivals were quick to respond. British Gas got wind of EDF's campaign and ran a spoiler the day before, its posters reading "Green Britain Day, for us it's every day." nPower, meanwhile, announced in ads a day later that "Every day's a green day for Climate Cops". (The Climate Cops are an nPower educational programme.) Ecotricity, a green electricity specialist, mocked EDF's "Do something green for the team" 2012 cash-in, going with "Do something *really* green for the team – switch to Ecotricity".

If any one of them has a right to feel a little bit peeved by EDF's campaign, it's Ecotricity. It is a British company, green issues are its main selling point and it has been using a green Union Jack as its logo for two years. The firm has said it will instigate legal proceedings against EDF for trademark infringement.

EDF may well be cursing its agency, Euro RSCG, for that wizard Green Britain Day idea.

JUST to be clear, the Tourism Queensland "Best Job in the World" ads, which culminated in a Briton being employed as the caretaker of a desert island on the Great Barrier Reef for six months, were not a genuine recruitment drive. They were a PR stunt.

That much was recognised at the Cannes Advertising Festival, where the campaign, created by a Brisbane-based agency, won two of the top prizes this year.

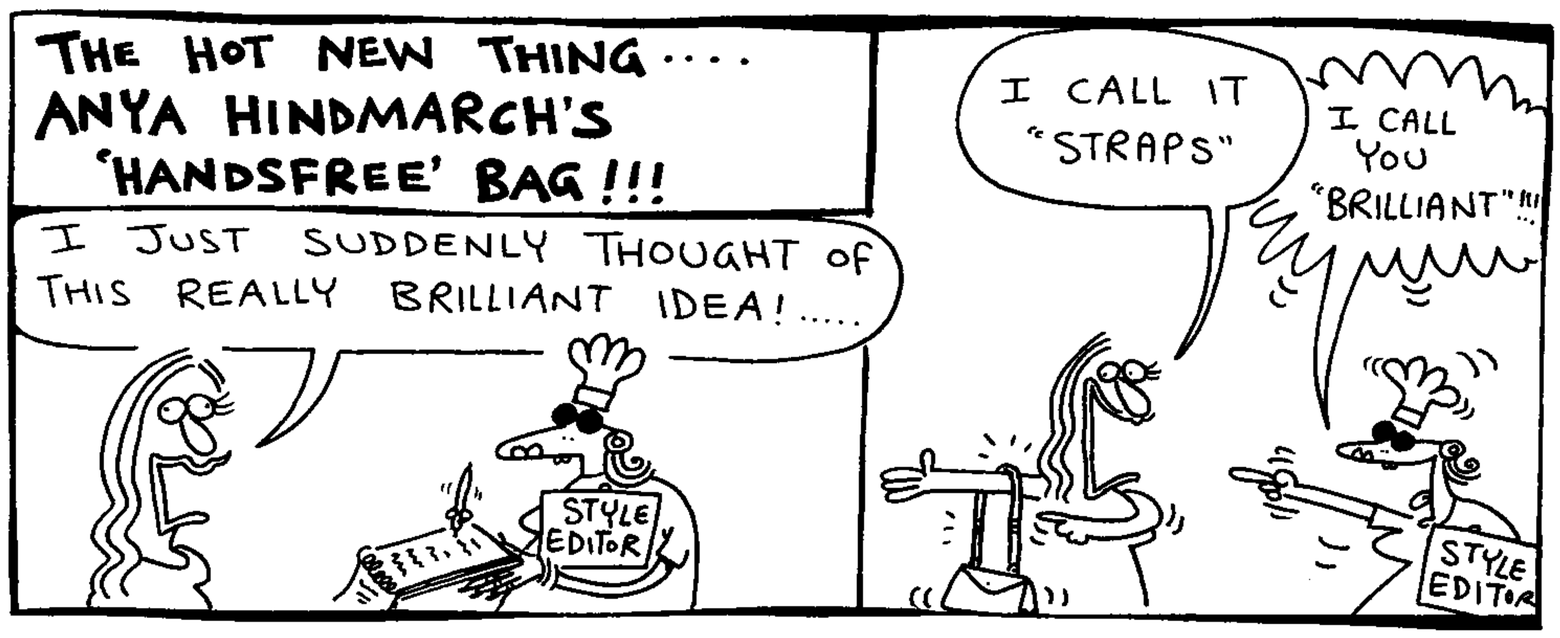
It doesn't seem to bother our distinguished press, however. Only a month after they obligingly swallowed the Tourism Australia PR lure and turned it into a major story, they've fallen for it again. Wookey Hole's search for a witch, on £50,000 a year, appeared in the *Guardian*, the *Times* and even bagged a mention on the BBC national news. If indeed the chosen witch does get 50k, that will be a piddling amount to pay for coverage across all those outlets. Expect more wacky job offers any day soon.

LAST issue we reported on Twiggy's unveiling as the new old face of Olay, even though she had previously launched her own rival skincare brand.

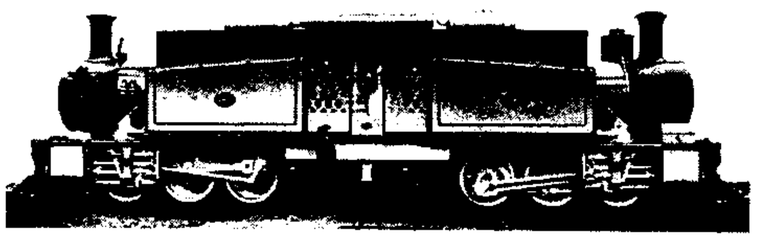
Now a reader writes to remind us that in recent years the Twig also endorsed the boycott of Herbal Essences products by anti-vivisection activists Uncaged. Herbal Essences is, of course, a Procter & Gamble brand, as is… Olay.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


THE HOT NEW THING.... ANYA HINDMARCH'S 'HANDSFREE' BAG!!!
I JUST SUDDENLY THOUGHT of THIS REALLY BRILLIANT IDEA!.....
STYLE EDITOR
I CALL IT "STRAPS"
I CALL YOU "BRILLIANT"!!!
STYLE EDITOR

SIGNAL FAILURES



NAO joke

SINCE announcing that the government would take back and temporarily run the east coast mainline franchise from National Express, transport secretary Andrew Adonis has been using last October's National Audit Office report to fend off criticism of rail franchising.

According to Adonis, it's not in the public interest "for us to have a nationalised train operating company indefinitely… because of our recent experience of rail franchising, which has, as the NAO said, delivered good value to the taxpayer."

Has it really? As *Eye* 1222 noted, the NAO report in question did *not* compare franchising with any other train-operating model: it merely compared the letting of franchises recently with the letting of franchises a few years earlier.

The NAO was impressed that the eight newest franchises "should" turn an £811m subsidy into a £326m payment to government in 2011-12, although that depended on "a continued strong increase in the number of passenger journeys". It said taxpayers wouldn't be exposed to "revenue shortfall" in the first four years of new franchises, conveniently ignoring that taxpayers were already covering the shortfall at First Great Western's new franchise.

Adonis reckons that of 41 franchise deals to date, "only two have failed until now" (Connex South Eastern and GNER, both scrapped early). But he ignores Virgin CrossCountry, scrapped four years early; renegotiation of FGW's franchise in 2006; and the largesse needed to prop up Virgin West Coast after the upgrade plan it hatched with Railtrack bombed. He also ignores a 2005 NAO report which noted that by 2003, more than a third of train companies had "management contracts" – ie bailouts for failed franchises.

WATCHDOG Passenger Focus welcomed Adonis's east-coast "decision" for ending "a period of uncertainty" for passengers. But in fact the uncertainty goes on.

Despite the secretary of state's intervention, National Express Group says it may not actually give up the east-coast franchise if business improves. Meanwhile, there's also uncertainty over the 25 extra services a day NEG promised from next year, and Adonis himself still doesn't know if he can strip NEG of its other more lucrative franchises as punishment for dumping east-coast.

NEWS of NEG's problems on the east-coast mainline was broken not by government but by an NEG statement to the City – confirming the supremacy of shareholders over passengers and taxpayers on a rail system specified and funded by the state.

It's a familiar tale. Railtrack shareholders were lavishly compensated after pisspoor management caused their company's collapse. And when the Strategic Rail Authority agreed in 2002 to waive Virgin West Coast's promised £1.2bn franchise payments, Stagecoach (half-owner of Virgin Trains) broke the news to shareholders; SRA boss Richard Bowker later admitted the timing of Stagecoach's financial results was "important" when the deal was hurried through (*Eye* 1083).

WHEN the government agency Transport Scotland negotiated First ScotRail's franchise extension last year, it was so scared of doing anything that might influence "market activity" or FirstGroup's share price, it didn't consult stakeholders or present Scotland's transport minister with a full business case.

Transport Scotland's puritanical approach to FirstGroup's share price contrasted with its handling of FirstGroup shareholder Guy Houston, whom it had recruited from FirstGroup to be its finance director (see *Eyes* 1229 and 1233).

MSPs on Scotland's public audit committee were appalled to learn that no protocol to manage his interest as a shareholder was written down until he'd been working for TS for at least nine months, and that TS had left Houston to set out those arrangements himself.

When Audit Scotland revealed this, TS let Houston resign without working his three months' notice. TS refused to talk about Houston's "compromise agreement", so MSPs couldn't tell if TS had broken public-finance rules which say: "Compensation should not be offered in order to avoid normal management procedures, disciplinary action, unwelcome publicity or reputational damage." The MSPs concluded last month: "The committee considers it discourteous and obstructive that some of the evidence gathered during the course of its inquiry was only made available after repeated requests… information was not given in an open and transparent way and… important issues remain outstanding."

'Dr B Ching'

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

SPONSORS for academy schools are supposed to have a "record of success in other enterprises", says the government, and bring "an essential drive and focus to the academy governance… a refreshingly different and innovative approach to management".

That's certainly true at the newly announced all-boys academy in Birkenhead, where the lead sponsor is to be local-boy-made-millionaire businessman David Hughes. Hughes was the boss of the now defunct Allsports, which went under in 2006 owing the authorities a £1.4m fine for illegal price-fixing during the Manchester United football shirts scandal. Hughes himself came under particular fire from the Office of Fair Trading, as incriminating passages from his diary had been scored out with black marker pen. Allsports owed around £30m to investors, sportswear brands and Charlton Athletic FC, which was sponsored by the firm.

That failure wasn't a one-off. Hughes was also the owner of Millennium Estates, a property developer building footballers' mansions in Cheshire. The company went belly-up in January after branching out into apartments in Liverpool and Manchester. "Refreshingly different" indeed.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

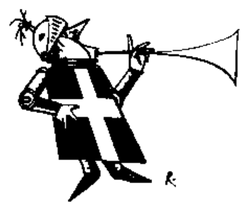
CAMBERWELL College of Arts boasts that it is "*the* place to study printmaking, boasting an international reputation for the quality of work and teaching". But its current students are unconvinced, claiming they had too little teaching and spent much of the past year dealing with broken equipment.

All 33 students graduating on this year's Printmaking MA signed an open letter to college dean Natalie Brett, raising concerns about the course and the way it has suffered from funding cuts. They complain of too few tutorials and visiting lecturers, as the tutor to student ratio has dwindled; a lack of space to work; and they say the college failed to act on its duties to repair or replace the very equipment they were there to learn how to use.

Full-time students on the year-long postgraduate course had paid a £3,995 fee, while international students had forked out a massive £11,900. But some key items of technical kit were unavailable for much of the time.

"The broken equipment in etching and screen-printing took two terms to mend," says the letter, adding that the stranglehold on resources meant that over-used items wore out and weren't replaced.

EYE TOLD YOU SO



WHEN former McKinsey consultant Natalie Ceeney became chief executive of the National Archives in 2005, the *Eye* queried whether someone with no experience of archive work or historical study – and who had previously dubbed the libraries and archives sector "the knowledge industry" – could be trusted with the nation's memory (*Eye* 1140).

This month those fears came to pass as historians and other researchers reacted in horror to news of severe cutbacks at the Kew-based archives, formerly the Public Record Office. From 2010 the National Archives will be closed on Mondays, 30 currently vacant jobs won't be filled and 35 out of 105 specialist staff are to go (although no management or marketing posts will be lost) to make a 10 percent budget cut by next year.

Ceeney's announcement of cuts made much of the statistic that 170 documents are now viewed online for every original seen at Kew, as if that made everything better. Wonderful as it might be, historians say haphazard web searching should be used to supplement, not substitute for, expert knowledge and the opportunity to see documents first hand. Anyway, if the Archives' bosses don't want people to come to Kew, why did they just spend £4m on the Kew 2008 project to refurbish the reading rooms, only to have them stand empty every Monday? A campaign and petition against the cuts get under way this week at www.action4archives.com

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

WHERE would be a good place to put the planned university-sponsored Durham City Academy school? Er, the two sites being considered are a playing field… or another playing field.

The new school, which will combine the Gilesgate Sports College and Belmont School Community Arts College, has already been opposed by parents, pupils, staff and governors; but Durham county council is carrying on regardless and consulting on the two possible sites.

It describes "option one" as simply "land on Sunderland Road, opposite Durham City Retail Park" – ignoring the cricket and football pitches, basketball and tennis courts, bowling green and bike track that the school would displace if it is built on the community playing fields currently on the land. "Option two" is the Belmont School site itself and would involve building on the present school's own detached playing field.

MEANWHILE in Liverpool, a primary school is having to bus its pupils eight miles to play sports while neighbouring football pitches lie unused as a regeneration project drags on and on.

Kensington Junior School was first promised access to the land, a former reservoir, 15 years ago. It is currently leased by Hope University from United Utilities; but a deal with local regeneration body Kensington Community Sports has been so delayed that sports facilities built on the site have become overgrown and dilapidated without ever having been used.

Local MP Jane Kennedy complains that whole generations of children have now passed through the school without ever having been able to kick so much as a ball on the site, while the broken promises and excuses from the regeneration bodies rumble on.

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

TOWER SHAMLETS

HUNDREDS of thousands of pounds remain unaccounted for at a flagship community centre in the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

The Davenant Centre on Whitechapel Road, a listed former school building dating back to the 17th century, was refurbished as a modern "education and youth centre" between 2004 and 2006. Initial funding of £1.7m came from the council and other bodies, including the London Development Agency. By 2005 costs had escalated and another £1m went into the scheme, part from the council and part from a Natwest loan.

"In 2006 significant internal management problems arose," a briefing from officers to the council's cabinet says. "No management accounts had been kept and no annual general meeting... was held. The centre was unable to service the loan... The infighting culminated in litigation and subsequent legal costs... the centre was now broadly dysfunctional."

Firm action was needed, so an interim management committee was appointed and a further £863,000 loan negotiated. Alas, that committee is now "in internal dispute", with the financial crisis exacerbated by non-collection of rents from bodies using the building, which has brought the centre "close to insolvency" with debts of around £400,000.

One non-payer of rent is the Jagonari Centre, a women's organisation which as recently as February this year received £1.2m from Tower Hamlets to run children's activities until 2011. Jagonari (which means "women wake up" in Bengali) was founded in 1999 by the council's former deputy leader and second homes scandal star, Baroness Pola Uddin. It runs the usual range of yoga, photography and keep-fit classes, plus a number of East End favourites such as Arabic and bicycling for burka wearers. In 2002 it won unwelcome headlines after letting rooms to jihadist group al-Muhajiroun and a hate preacher called Abdullah el-Faisal, who advocated the killing of Jews.

The Davenant shambles is embarrassing for Tower Hamlets' "lead member for resources and performance", Cllr Ohid Ahmed, not only because of the waste of resources and lack of performance, but also because his wife works for a Jagonari project, necessitating him to declare an interest whenever the matter is discussed in cabinet.

It has also embarrassed council leader Lutfur Rahman, given that he lives almost next door to the Davenant – although he reminds everyone he was not council leader when most of this was going on.

The cabinet has agreed that the centre should go into voluntary administration to protect it from creditors, attempt to draw up long-overdue accounts, appoint a new interim board and – inevitably – be lent a further £350,000 by taxpayers.

● AT a bad-tempered Tower Hamlets council meeting last week, during which opposition councillors tried to get to the truth about the sacking, sorry, "moving on", of chief executive Martin Smith and his £300,000 payoff (*Eyes passim*), rattled Labour councillor Marc Francis denounced mild-mannered Tory group leader Peter Golds as "a liar and a fantasist". Before the meeting councillors received an email from monitoring officer Isabella Freeman instructing them that the departing chief could not be mentioned by name. Like the victim of a Stalinist purge, he has officially become a non-person.

TIED UP IN NOTTS

BACK in 2006 Nottingham city council paid consultants Hardmoor Associates £30,000 to evaluate the performance of councillors and senior officers.

Hardmoor reviewed the council's policies and conducted 70 interviews with councillors, senior managers and trade union officials. In 2007 the report concluded that the Labour council was "dysfunctional", "totally lacked understanding of who the customer is", "ignored complaints", described the senior management team as "totally ineffective" and criticised councillors for "meddling". Oh dear.

For the next two years the council tried to keep the report away from public view. Former deputy chief executive Adrienne Roberts pleaded with its author, Darryl Stephenson, to water down his findings and remove the "dysfunctional" reference. Stephenson declined, because "it is the key message".

Freedom of information requests to release the report were ignored. The council gave way last month after it was leaked to the local *Evening Post* newspaper. It has since emerged that the council had ignored legal advice, costing £5,000, which said the report *should* be disclosed under FoI rules.

The council has now appointed a new set of consultants, Invigor8 [*sic*], to write a new report. Invigor8 has been paid more than £80,000, but the report is some way off. Hopefully a better result is in prospect. You gets what you pays for!

● THE magnificently-monikered Cllr Peter Gore de-Vaux Balbirnie, prominent member of the Tendring First party on Tendring district council in Essex, has been asked to explain to Inspector Knacker why he had 30 envelopes, each containing £1,000 in cash, at his home near Clacton. Knacker, who has seized the dosh, said: "Police arrested a man... on suspicion of soliciting a gift as a member of a public body in accordance with the Public Bodies Corrupt Practices Act 1889." Earlier this year Cllr Balbirnie was suspended for three months for bursting into the planning department and swearing at officers after learning that a planning application he favoured had been recommended for refusal. He is on police bail until 1 October.

MOGG'S BAD THING

JOHN EVERITT, chief exec of Tory Bath and North-East Somerset council (Banes), lost no time

"Excuse my son – he means well"

when alerted to the fact that a council employee had improperly used council time and a computer to issue political press releases for a parliamentary candidate: he tipped off party group leaders so they could erase evidence of any similar activities, in case he had to send in the IT police.

It followed a complaint about James Hinchcliffe, a researcher employed by Banes for the Conservative group, who had worked on two press releases on behalf of Jacob Rees-Mogg, prospective Tory parliamentary candidate for North-East Somerset and son of former *Times* editor Mystic Mogg.

Political researchers in local authorities, although linked to a party, are nevertheless on the council payroll and deemed to be "politically restricted". This limits their activities to the group they work for at the council, and Rees-Smug is not and never has been a councillor. The story is further embarrassment for the old Etonian, who has already had to apologise for plagiarising parts of a Trevor Kavanagh column in the *Sun* for his election material. None of this seems to have harmed the career of Hinchliffe, the rule-bending spinner. He has now been hired as senior communications officer... for Banes council.

● PREVIOUS *Eyes* have reported the demoralising upheaval caused by Birmingham city council's multi-million pound "business transformation initiative". Happily the council's £200,000-a-year chief exec Stephen Hughes has had a brilliant idea to help his 30,000 staff embrace the changes. He has emailed instructions on how to make paper butterflies. Why? Because, according to "chaos theory", a butterfly flapping its wings in a rainforest may set off a chain of events which, er, leads to a hurricane on the other side of the world and "you have the power to make changes and create something special". Mr Hughes has been ridiculed for this in Brum. Bet they won't be laughing if he bags "blue-sky thinker of the year" when the Rotten Boroughs Awards are handed out in January!

BLUE SERGE NEWS

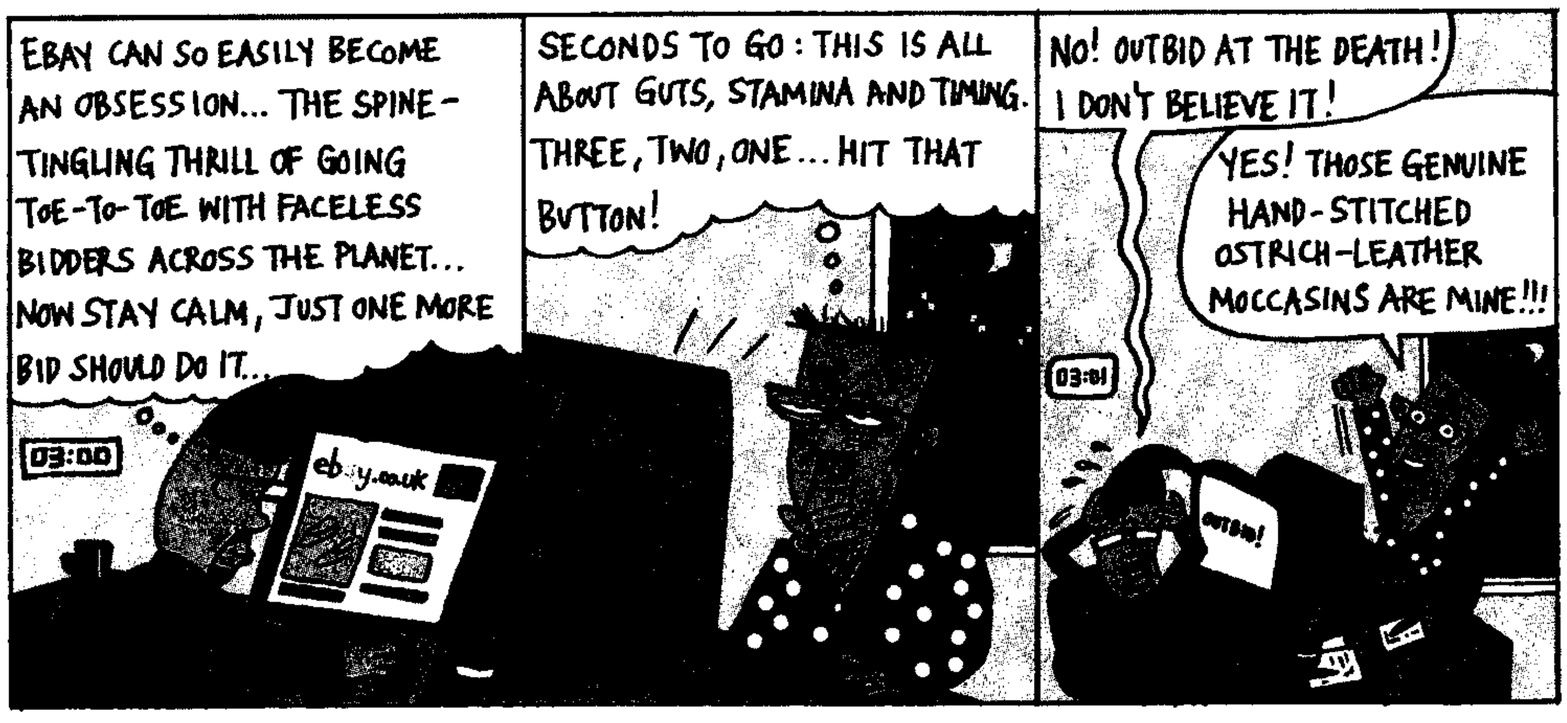
CONSULTATION? Richmond's Lib Dem council leader "Blue" Serge Lourie can't even pronounce it. Last week he told a packed council chamber that he "believes in contraception" while continuing to ignore all objections to a controversial Countryside Properties housing development by the Thames at Twickenham.

There are good reasons to be sceptical of CP, as Cllr Lurex well knows – because they appear in the council's own confidential evaluation, seen by the *Eye*. The documents admit that "Countryside's profit appears on the high side" – CP plans to make a whopping £4.4m from a scheme that costs £12.7m -- while it has provided "no specific commentary on development risks and mitigation of these". That's bad news, for as *Eye* readers know, Countryside has a habit of risk-taking in its housing developments: building outside planning permission in Mile End (*Eye* 1165), ignoring hundreds of tonnes of asbestos contamination in Rochdale (1129) and unexploded bombs in Hackney (1130).

Cllr Durex claims he is "intent on delivering a scheme that has real benefit". But for whom? While Twickenham's riverside will be blighted by an ugly, er, condominium, Countryside will get a 1,000-year lease on the land, and the council will pocket half the profits. Trebles all round!

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


EBAY CAN SO EASILY BECOME AN OBSESSION... THE SPINE-TINGLING THRILL OF GOING TOE-TO-TOE WITH FACELESS BIDDERS ACROSS THE PLANET... NOW STAY CALM, JUST ONE MORE BID SHOULD DO IT...
03:00
eb y.co.uk
SECONDS TO GO: THIS IS ALL ABOUT GUTS, STAMINA AND TIMING. THREE, TWO, ONE... HIT THAT BUTTON!
NO! OUTBID AT THE DEATH! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
YES! THOSE GENUINE HAND-STITCHED OSTRICH-LEATHER MOCCASINS ARE MINE!!!
03:01
OUTBID!

NOOKS and CORNERS

CAMBRIDGE college is allowing demolition of a decent little building associated with the sainted scientist Charles Darwin to make room for… a car park.

After Darwin's death his widow, Emma Wedgwood, moved to Cambridge to be near their sons. She lived in The Grove, a Regency house now in the grounds of Fitzwilliam College. Two of these sons built themselves houses close by in the later 19th century and at about the same time (probably in the 1870s) a new half-timbered lodge was built by the Huntingdon Road. This pleasant and unassuming building was subsequently acquired by another new college, New Hall, which tried (in vain) to pull it down.

New Hall, founded in 1954 for women, now calls itself "Murray Edwards College". Its buildings, with a prominent, curious domed dining hall, date from the 1960s and were designed by the architects of the Barbican. The lodge in the Huntingdon Road managed to survive – until now. Murray Mint College wants rid of it to create space for cars. To the fury of local residents, whom the college forgot to consult, a number of trees were chopped down first. Cambridge council has given permission to destroy the lodge, its "Historical Environment Manager" accepting that Emma was only Darwin's cousin. True, but she was also his wife.

Dons can be worse architectural vandals than clergy, convinced their immediate needs transcend considerations like public amenity, historical continuity and architectural quality (which is why Cambridge has been so badly buggered up in the last half-century). The irresponsibility of the college was best conveyed by its president, Dr Jennifer Barnes, who said: "The lodge has always been a very shabby and run down student residence because it's an old house." Has she noticed that older colleges in Cambridge succeed in maintaining and using much older buildings?

Locals think the college should look after the lodge or sell it; and they have won a brief reprieve. But Murray Mint College remains determined to destroy this charming, handsome and now poignant relic to accommodate more cars – although there is a suspicion that demolition anticipates the planned enlargement of the local conservation area. If the college succeeds, it will be inexcusable vandalism.

THE British Museum is also convinced of its moral rightness when it wants to tamper with its historic and magnificent buildings.

I described the proposals for the "North West Development", which involves demolishing two decent replica houses in Montague Street, in Eyes 1229 and 1235. The Camden Civic Society and the Bloomsbury conservation areas advisory committee continue to object strongly – which so annoys the BM it complained to the Society of Antiquaries for reporting the fact in its online newsletter.

The Civic Society considers the scheme by Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners "one of the very worst applications we have seen involving important historical buildings" and is disappointed there has been no reduction in bulk of the proposed new buildings and no reconsideration of the barbarous plan to cut new openings in the stone walls of Smirke's Great Court – "an act of needless vandalism".

The Camden Civic Society remains concerned about the effect of the position and bulk of the new buildings on Smirke's Arched Room and on Burnet's King Edward VII Wing and has commissioned a daylight study from Arup Lighting. This concludes that daylight will be significantly blocked out, meaning artificial light will be required constantly. The Civic Society also wonders why the conservation department needs space on an upper floor in a new glass building (where there will be too much daylight) rather than using existing structures as most museums do.

It's depressing that a venerable institution like the British Museum felt obliged to hire a fashionable name in the shape of Milord Rogers; and even more depressing that English Heritage has now changed tack. A year ago, EH doubted that the demolitions met criteria laid down by the official guidance document PPG 15, while its London advisory committee has expressed doubts about the whole scheme. But last month EH told Camden council it now found the proposals, though virtually unchanged, "acceptable" and that it welcomed "the enhancements that such a scheme would bring to the public realm and to the setting of the King Edward VII Building".

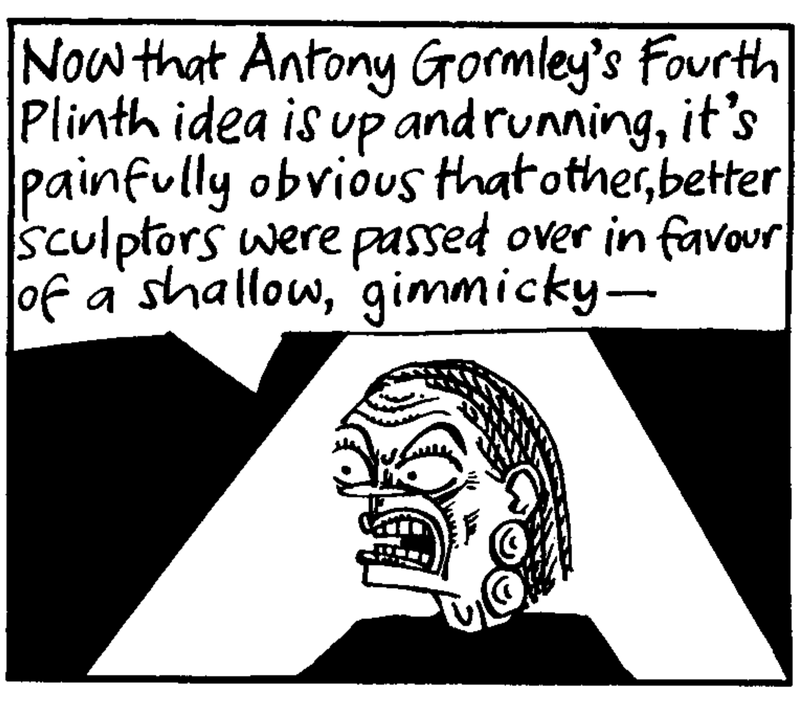
In this craven volte-face and denial of EH's basic brief, the letter finds there is "no loss of any historical fabric or harm to the architectural character or composition of the north elevation of the Great Court" by punching arbitrary and asymmetrical holes in the considered Greek Revival composition. EH is also apparently happy with the effect of the new building on the Arched Room, accepting that new lighting will be necessary "to compensate for any loss of natural light". So much for energy efficiency and the environment.

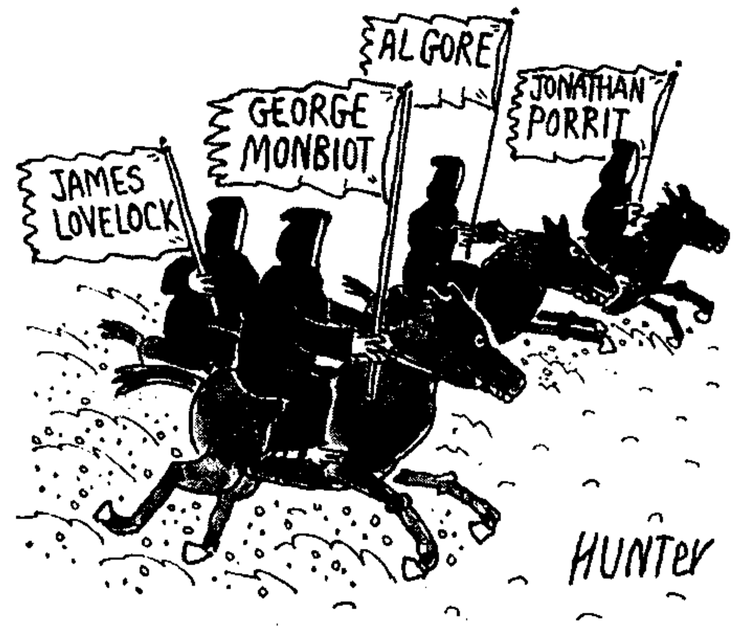
As the Camden Civic Society complains, the preservation of historic fabric is not enough: the setting of historic buildings should be considered too. So why has EH changed its mind? Is the British Museum beyond criticism… or has Lord Rogers perhaps exercised his legendary forceful charm?

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


Now that Antony Gormley's Fourth Plinth idea is up and running, it's painfully obvious that other, better sculptors were passed over in favour of a shallow, gimmicky—
Next!
I haven't finished yet!



NEWS FROM THE SANDPIT

A LACK of suitable helicopters in Afghanistan has led Nato and British forces to hire civilian contractors, some of whom have dubious records.

One such contractor, the Russian company Vertical-T, was operating the Mi-8 transport helicopter that crashed on take-off at Kandahar last Sunday, killing 16 people on board. Vertical-T was operating as a sub-contractor for the Canadian aircraft company, SkyLink Aviation Inc. SkyLink was suspended from the United Nations list of approved contractors back in 2007 following an investigation into the UN's multi-billion-dollar procurement contracts. But it seems to be thriving in Afghanistan.

Vertical-T was criticised by a Nepalese government commission when another of its Mi-8s crashed in Nepal in 2008: "The chopper crashed due to the violation of regulation, lack of experience and familiarisation with local terrain and weather, as well as poor handling of flight control systems." The Russian pilot could not understand English and could not, therefore, heed air traffic control instructions.

The Mi-8 crash at Kandahar came only hours after another SkyLink helicopter was lost in Afghanistan; on that occasion to enemy fire. A civilian Moldovan Mi-26 heavy lift helicopter, the biggest of its kind in the world, contracted by SkyLink, was shot down by the Taliban very close to the British base at Sangin in an incident that was heavily under-reported. Its six Ukrainian crew were killed.

What was it doing there? According to Associated Press, "the civil aviation authority of the former Soviet republic of Moldova said a rocket or a missile struck the Mi-26 helicopter, owned by the Moldovan air charter company Pecotox-Airi. The helicopter had been ferrying humanitarian aid when the crash took place, the Moldovans said in a statement."

Other news agencies stuck to the story that it was delivering humanitarian supplies to locals. But in fact, the helicopter was under contract to the UK Ministry of Defence and was resupplying British troops at their Sangin base because there were no British helicopters available.

The Moldovan aircraft was not fitted with ballistic protection for the crew, nor with defence protection equipment. It didn't even carry flares to deflect incoming heat-seeking missiles. Instead it had to rely on a bag of fireworks a crewman would chuck out of the back if he saw one coming.

SkyLink's subcontractor, Pecotox-Airi, was on the CIA's watch-list following the discovery of evidence it was working for the now jailed international arms dealer Viktor Bout. The company was also on a UN Security Council list of companies flagrantly violating the 2003 arms embargo in Somalia. In 2007, the CAA of the Republic of Moldova itself revoked air operator certificates for eight Moldovan air carriers operating cargo flights, including Pecotox-Air. Enough to scare off most potential customers – but not our own MoD.

'Squarebasher'

Letters

Covering fire

Sir,

You sick sods. Michael Jackson hasn't even been laid to rest yet... yet your front page is – even by your standards – in incredibly bad taste.

Would you have made a similar "joke" (very funny... ha-bloody-ha) about the "Reverend"(!) Paul Foot? I think not.

Please cancel my subscription immediately.

D. ROBINSON,

Sale.

Sir,

Because of the appalling tastelessness of the Michael Jackson Memorial Issue (Eye 1240), I have no option but to continue with my subscription for at least another year.

Sincerely,
KEEF GREEN (Dr),

Via email.

Sir,

The front page of this issue was mildly amusing but should have been replaced by the startling headline on the bottom of page 23. Was this too cruel? Are you losing your satirical edge? We should be told.

R.M. HILL,

Via email.

PS: Do not cancel the subscription.

Border trouble

Sir,

Re Rotten Boroughs (Eye 1239). I was cheesed off to read the piece on "Workplace Walking". By all means highlight the buffoonery of these quangoes; you are the only area of the media to do so effectively.

But why does your journo feel the need to enter the realms of racism?

I am fully aware of Scotland's appalling health record; indeed some of my countrymen are delighted to be at the top of any table even if it is the obesity league. Unfortunately, your article goes too far. "The land of the deep fried Mars bar and the scotch pie sandwich." Oh how we laughed... at the puerile "London-centric" attempt at humour. How many seconds of thought did that take the team? "McQuango"... please stop, my sides are splitting... No, it gets better – "Jimmies"... priceless.

The journey would not be from the pub to the fish shop. Fish shops sell fish of many varieties, most of which tend to be healthy. No it would be from the pub to the "chippy" in the west and "chipper" in the east.

Your article was worth printing on its own merits without the cheap racist shot.

Kind regards,
GORDON (ALMOST JIMMY REALLY) HAWKER,

Via email.

Clouding the issue

Sir,

Fame at last! Sleepy old Bexhill makes the pages of Private Eye. A shame, then, that Piloti's article (Eye 1239) about the proposed demolition of St Barnabas Church was spoilt by half-truths and inaccuracies.

*An example: the previous incumbent did **not** resign under a deep cloud. He took medical retirement because he was a sick man. The deep clouds came later and were nothing to do with St Barnabas. Mark you, Piloti was right about one thing – money. It could take millions to put the building straight; the parish hasn't got the money, neither has the diocese. Any offers?*

THE REV CANON EDWARD BRYANT,
Rector of Bexhill.

Brought to Trask

Sir,

Bookworm's story about the society of Authors' Betty Trask Prize (Books & Bookmen, Eye 1239) was hopelessly ill-informed. Joanna Kavenna, who judged the prize with Rachel Cusk and myself, is no longer represented by the same agent or even the same agency as the winner Samantha Harvey and the runner-up Eleanor Catton.

None of us was remotely interested in, or influenced by, who published what books or who represented which author.

Your suggestion of skulduggery does not particularly worry any of us judges, but it is unfair to two young authors at the start of their careers to suggest that they won for any reason beyond their very considerable talent. Samantha Harvey's The Wilderness and Eleanor Catton's The Rehearsal are highly recommended to Eye readers.

TERENCE BLACKER,

Norfolk.

Lookalike

Harriet

Gordon

Sir,

It seems that the Labour Party will be going right to the line before calling the next general election. Still, at least Harriet Harman will be able to resume her television career by reprising her role as Gordon the Mainline Engine in the popular children's programme "Thomas and Friends".

JOE JONES,

Via email.

Number crunched

Sir,

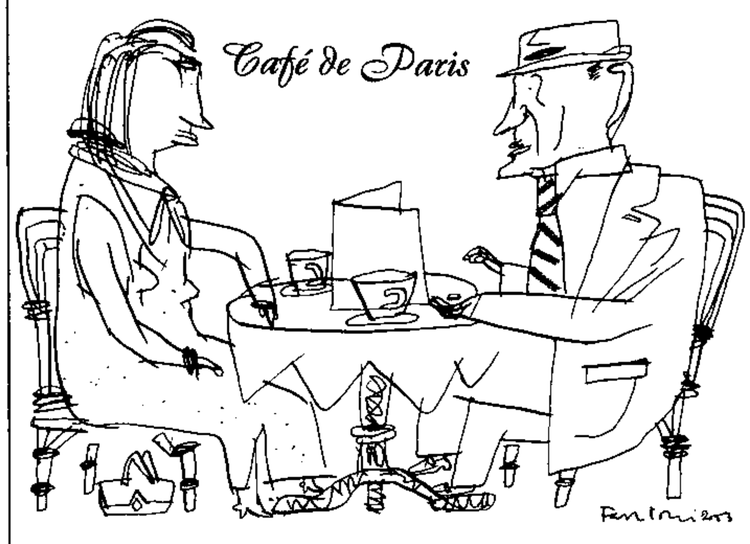
*"With the Queen costing us all 69p a week" (Street of Shame, Eye 1240). Run that past "Number Cruncher". It comes to a grand total of £35.88 – what a bargain. On the other hand... if it is 69p for **each** of us (60,000,000) a **year** it comes to £41,400,000, which is much closer to the published figure.*

Sorry.
PETER HOOLE,

Via email.

● A pissed hack baffled by mathematics writes: Er, sorry about the confusion. It was 69p a year. Each. Thank you to the many readers who pointed out the mistake.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Fifty-nine euros for two coffees. That's not bad..."

Windy argument

Sir,

Windmills with "sails" were once predominant in many flat places like Holland, Norfolk, and Anglesey for milling grain. These were not very windy locations. They also had an abundance of water. So why did they build windmills? The reason is of course that there were very few locations in these flat places where water flowed, dropping from one height to a lower height. In far windier locations, like the major parts of Wales, water power was preferred despite strong winds. Why? Because streams and small rivers came tumbling out of the hills and mountains to form cascading height drops full of kinetic energy. This was obvious to the clever people of centuries ago! They only used wind power if no other power was available.

Wind is quite weak and unreliable. So also are these massive modern wind turbines. A turbine of any kind produces energy by employing the momentum of what passes through its blades. Momentum is mass times velocity. Both water and wind do not have very high velocities, whether driving an old corn mill or a modern turbine-driven electric generator. The big difference is that water is nearly a thousand times as dense as air, so water-driven turbines are far more powerful and reliable than wind turbines.

Politicians are besotted with wind turbine energy, which they subsidise with our public money to a ridiculous cost to us. Our electricity costs will soon cripple our economy, as will the blackouts when the wind does not blow. We have massive tidal resources in Wales. The Bristol Channel has the second highest rise and fall of tides in the world. These tides are reliable, set by the moon's position and gravity relevant to planet earth. We can predict tidal water movements to the minute for a thousand years into the future. We cannot accurately predict the wind for the next five minutes.

Yours,
IOAN RICHARD,

Via email.

Do not adjust your set

Sir,

'Remote Controller' concludes his review of "Gerry's Big Decision" (EyeTV, 1240) with "Although it is clear early on that only one of the companies has any hope... both the lucky and unlucky participants wept."

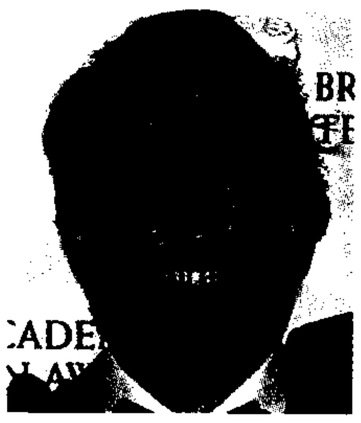
However, (Sir) Gerry did not pick a winner and loser, he chose to invest in both companies and if he had actually watched the show 'Remote Controller' would surely have known that? Methinks this is something you would report with considerable glee were it to have occurred in the Daily Mail?

Regards,
KEITH MALCOLM,

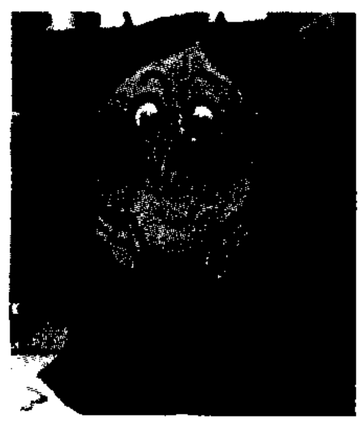
Via email.

● 'Remote Controller' apologises for the mistake, blaming it on "technical difficulties" with the watch-again service.

Lookalike



Cartoon



Mitchell

Sir,

It seems David Mitchell is, in fact, a French cartoon character. This explains why he manages to be on every channel simultaneously.

NEIL COLE,

London.

Baton charges

Sir,

Oh dear! Yet another toffee-nosed music snob gets their panties in a bunch over the thought that some people might actually mistake common old film music for "classical" (letter from Katherine Lewington, Eye 1240). She offers her credentials for a cheap swipe at John Williams as being a "music student just about to graduate". I offer mine as someone who has written about the subject of film scores semi-professionally for over two decades.

So, here's a little secret. Much "classical music" was and is composed as a response to images, be they on a stage in the form of opera or ballet, or as memories or abstracts in a composer's head. Film scores are composed to support or add emotional context to images on a screen. The principles of film scoring, especially the use of leitmotifs, are pretty much those popularised by Wagner, and many "classical" composers actually embraced the new medium of film when it arrived. Some film scores, such as Prokofiev's Alexander Nevsky, are now even regarded as classical and not film works.

Many who work in music are agreed that the most influential tunesmith of the last century was a film composer, the late Jerry Goldsmith, who broke new ground throughout his five-decade career.

The big mistake John Williams has made throughout his career is to write accessible tunes for films that are hugely popular, and as we all know if something is accessible and popular it must be artistically bankrupt because the "plebs" can fathom it.

GARY KESTER,

Via email.

Sir,

Sadly for the future of the music business, having a laugh at Classic FM (Eyes passim) brings only short term relief.

What CFM craves above all, apart from making lots of money from "tunes", is respectability. It does this on the cheap through sponsorship, allowing it to boast of "its" orchestras, opera company and so on. There is no evidence that listening to snippets of music has either brought larger audiences to concert halls or increased sales of recorded classical music. The CFM approach has involved endless recycling of old recordings in compilations and latterly, its Full Works series (a new concept, obviously), which occupies most of the meagre remaining Classical section of my local HMV.

Compare the BBC, the largest music organisation in the world, who still strive to "Inform, Educate and Entertain," with their five orchestras, choirs, competitions, commissions and – their greatest glory – the Proms, the world's largest music festival.

Yours,

ADRIAN LLOYD HUGHES,

Powys.

Pseudo Names

... We are really enjoying your Pseudo Names and don't want to miss any whilst we take our camper van around Iberia for the summer. Can you please postpone them for the holiday period?

BENNY DORM
BILL BOUGH
LIZ BUN.

... Most of these Pseudo Names are desperately unfunny.

P. SPOOR.

... Pseudo Names and Colemanballs on the same page! It reminds one of the great comedy acts of yore.

ERIC NERNY.

... It can be tough being the only child of parents who are obsessed with opera. As you can guess, I have suffered considerable embarrassment because of this.

ADAM BUTTERFLY.

... There was no call for my brother D. Nyle to make the comments he did about your correspondent C. Nyle (unrelated). Honestly, he can be such a prick!

P. NYLE.

... Looking back over earlier correspondence, we've been remarking that the letters seem less funny and inventive now than they used to be.

ROSE TINT
ED SPECTACLES.

... I am a Belgian woman learning English. Please explain to me why Pseudo Names are funny.

ANN TWERP.

... It is sad that Phuk Tifano's (Eye 1239) mixed heritage means he cannot fully appreciate Pseudo Names. I have a Welsh mother and an Indian father, but I find it hilarious!

VERA M. HUGHES-SINGH.

... Your Pseudo Names article, as a genre, must surely by now be as important as the most widely known English classic literature. We believe that this could still be being taught in schools in 400 years' time.

BERT SOFT
WAT LEIGHT
DREW YONDHHA
WIN DOE-BRAIKES.

... Like I. Littler (Pseudo Names, Eye 1239), people like me can't understand the fuss about the BNP either.

TAMARA BELONGSTÖME.

... I would be heartbroken if Pseudo Names ended.

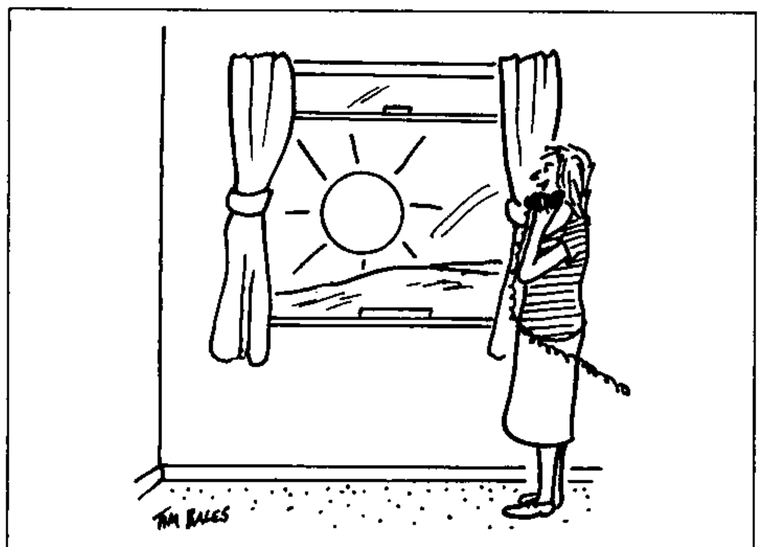
ANGIE O'PLASTY.

... Shurely your correspondent Running Joke is a Native American, not a "Native Indian". Native Americans gave the world pemmican, a vile mess involving rancid animal fat, while native Indians gave the UK a delicious cuisine featuring tasty vegetable snacks. Please put me in touch with anyone who disputes this.

R.G. BHAJI.

... I understand that the late Michael Jackson was a fan of Pseudo Names – perhaps you could keep it running by way of a tribute to this great star.

DONNA STOPP
TILYA GEDENOV.



"I can't make it in to work today – something's come up"

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Never has a football club the size of Saints in recent history really had to stare into the precipice."
NICK ILLINGSWORTH
(Richard Cooper)

"The Australians don't seem to have the wind beneath their belts."
MATTHEW HOGGARD, Radio 4
(Joe Wade)

"In tennis there has to be a winner sometimes."
ROGER FEDERER
(John Deery)

"He'll put the wind up you when he gets the bit between his tail."
GEOFFREY BOYCOTT, Radio 5 Live Extra
(m-o-g)

"He was a wonderful man, as was his wife."
SEAN RAFFERTY, Radio 3
(Colin Armstrong)

Pedantry Corner

... E.J. Thribb is clearly too young to pay close attention to vintage Dad's Army episodes (Eye 1240). If he had he would have seen that Private Sponge, while not the most voluble member of the Walmington-On-Sea Home Guard, spoke on an number of occasions, and sometimes several lines in an episode – of which Colin Bean's on screen credit as Private Sponge is living proof! His lines seem to consist of "Yes, Mr Mainwaring", so in truth it could be said he rarely said anything funny!

I.T. WILLIAMS.

... Gavel Basher's obvious schoolboy howler with the gerundival ("nemine contradicente", Called to Ordure, 1240),took me back with some pleasure to my O-level Latin classes with our revered Headmaster James "Pa" Farquhar M.A, whose aide-memoire for the irregular noun "nemo" went..."For nemo never let me say neminis or nemine, As nullius, nullo is the way..."

JOHN GRIBBLE.

... Oh no! Not again! Mona Grøna (Eye 1239, p23) must be Danish (ø), not Swedish (ö). Either way, it would be pronounced "Grurner", which rather spoils the effect.

BRIAN LILE.

*"Just look at that beautiful sunset! At least **that's** still free!"*

Letter from **Caracas**

from Our Own Correspondent

THE bravery of our great leader knows no bounds. Ready to fight to the last drop of Honduran blood, Hugo Chavez has let it be known that we Venezuelans will not rest until we have overthrown the "oligarchs" who turfed out his good friend, wealthy logging baron and 21st century socialist President "Mel" Zelaya, from Honduras.

Zelaya was turfed out in his pyjamas, and wasn't even given time to put on his cowboy boots or Stetson. If he hadn't had the foresight to keep his government credit card taped to his chest, where on earth would he have found the $80,000 he needed for a new set of togs?

Those Honduran soldiers who booted him out must now be quaking in their jackboots. Lt Col Chavez may have botched his attempt to overthrow the elected civilian government of Carlos Andres Perez here back in 1992. And it's true he did hand himself meekly over to the generals ten years later, when they threatened to drop a bomb on him for firing on a peaceful protest march. But as he has often said, that *pendejo* (roughly: "dickhead") belongs to the past. The next time, he's going down fighting.

As recently as March last year, to show he means business these days, he ordered ten battalions to the Colombian border. The Colombians hadn't even touched him – they just took out a guerrilla camp over the border in Ecuador. So think what he'd do if it was actually our fight.

Any expeditionary force to Honduras will of course need a large contingent of mechanics and a planeload of breakdown trucks. That will be to avoid scenes in last year's mobilization of tank transporters pulled over on the hard shoulder with blown gaskets. Not long afterwards, officers were sent out to place bulk orders of road maps.

As a field commander, the *Comandante* is himself unequalled. None of us can forget the sight of him in combat fatigues before a large map of Colombia, directing Operacion Emmanuel, the stirring campaign to free a child hostage from FARC guerrillas in December 2007. Of course, the bourgeois media never lets him forget that Emmanuel had actually been freed some time previously and was living safely in a children's home. But how was he to know? It is the thought that counts.

As inspiring as these epic battles is the single-minded dedication with which *el Comandante-Presidente* has defended – in speech after speech (after speech after speech) – essential human liberties such as freedom of expression, self-determination, the right to assembly and peaceful protest. In Honduras, that is.

Under socialism there's no need for such nonsense; but when an oppressed people is struggling against a right-wing tyranny, anything goes. The "human rights" mafia (all of them in the pay of the CIA, it goes without saying) will try to make out that there's some kind of contradiction between, say, complaining about the Honduran usurpers' censoring of the media and our own government's sovereign decision last week to revoke the licences of 240 radio stations.

They will deliberately misinterpret our leader's call, earlier this year, for student protesters to be given "a good dose of gas". And, worst of all, they are already suggesting parallels between the brutal ousting of Mel and the entirely constitutional replacement of the opposition mayor of Caracas (elected last November) with a loyal revolutionary appointed by our leader.

These are the same ones who can't see the difference between Chavez's rebellion in 1992 (supported by the people) and the Honduran putsch. Or who laugh at Raul Castro's moving defence of democratic rights. The people are not fooled. *Viva la revolucion!*

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "When they scoop up dead dogs off the street, they treat them better than this," former Chief Deputy Coroner John Linehan told reporters in Indianapolis. "I know Teresa Smith weighed 750 pounds when she died, but that was no reason to call in a filthy stinking tow truck to remove her body from her home. Her neighbours were sickened to see her corpse being dragged down the stairs on a mattress in broad daylight, through the courtyard of her apartment block, then winched and dumped onto the truck, covered with a filthy carpet, and driven off. I would never have let them throw

my loved one onto a truck like that, it's so disrespectful. It's just not the way to treat a human being. Obese or not."

But Detective Marcus Kennedy was unrepentant about the actions of the Marion County Coroner's Office. "We debated for quite a while about how we were going to get her out of her apartment, because the local funeral parlours refused to move her. We have no specific instructions on how to handle extremely obese corpses, so we decided to drag her out into the street on her own mattress. And because we didn't have a van large enough to carry her to the morgue, a tow truck seemed like the best option, because it has a motorised winch. What else could we have done?"

Smith's boyfriend, David Johnson, said he was disturbed by what he had seen. "They should have handled her differently. Dragging her onto a truck like that was like winching up a cow." *(WRTV Indianapolis, 21/5/09. Spotter: Ralph Smith)*

– ● –

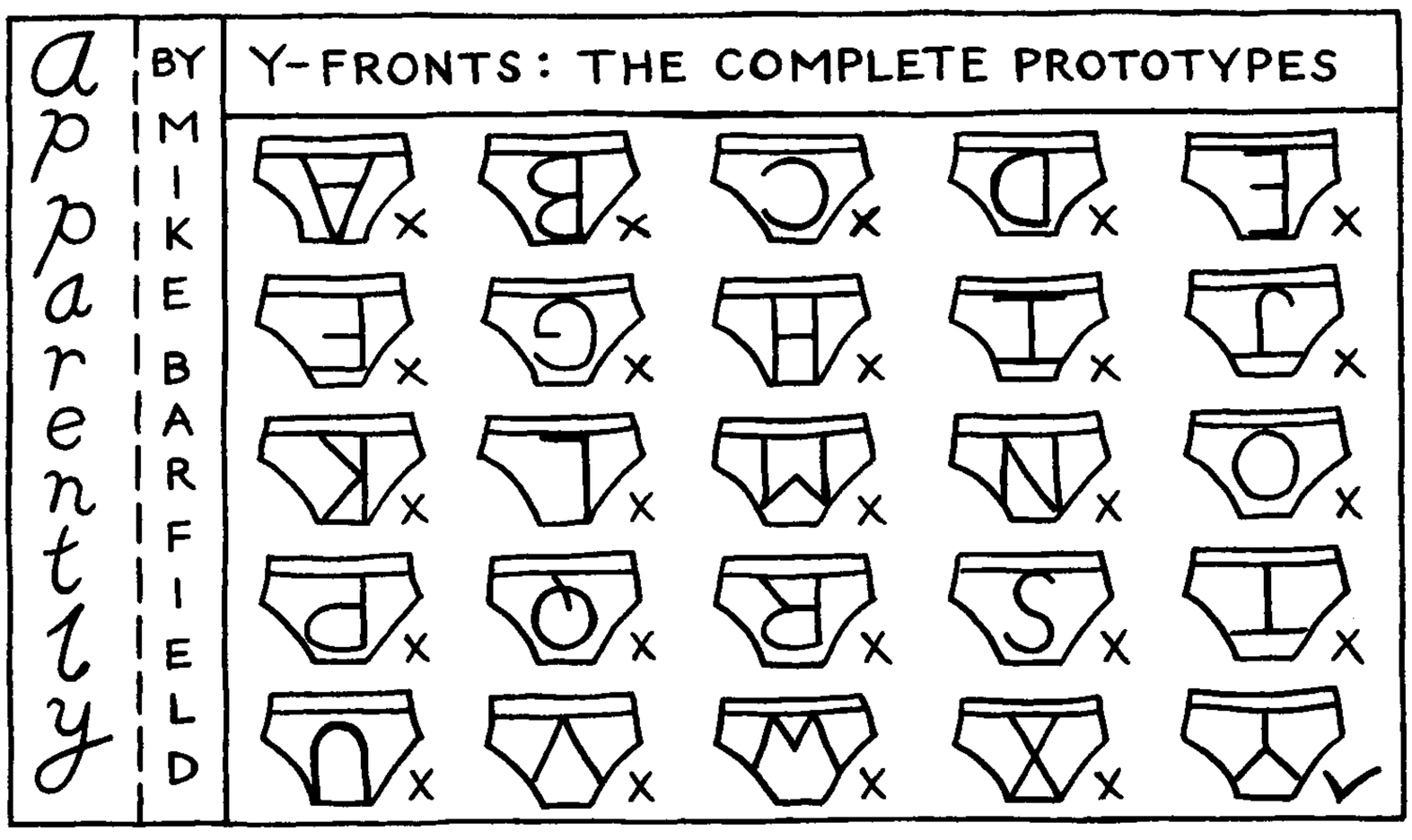
● *"WOULD A PERSON WITH A 1KW LINEAR AMPLIFIER please contact me? I want to use the output to test to see if I can initiate a thermonuclear fusion reaction. The experiment is to put a tube of low pressure hydrogen in the inductor of a tuned circuit and see if it will start a fusion reaction. If it does, the tuned circuit will be able to maintain oscillations by the energy of the fusion reactions. I will provide the tube of hydrogen and an outline design of a circuit matched into 50 Ω. This is intended as a new source of power.*

"The experiment is a bit dangerous as I understand it may be difficult to stop the nuclear reactions once they start. There is a danger from radiation and a possible nuclear explosion if the power runs away. Contact Christopher, G4ZHT (London)." (Radio Society of Great Britain magazine, February 2009. Spotter: Tony)

– ● –

● "It is true that I have not brushed my teeth or bathed in water for the past thirty-five years," Kailash Singh Kalau told reporters in Chatav, India, "but I tell you that I am not unclean. Every evening, villagers gather to watch me perform Agni Snan, which is just like taking a bath, except I use fire instead of water. I light a bonfire, smoke marijuana, then stand on one leg in the smoke for an hour, praying to Lord Shiva. Fire baths help to kill all the germs and infections in the body. It was so long ago that I started doing this that I cannot now remember why I began my nightly fire ablutions, but I continue out of love for my country. I shall only end my vow when all problems confronting the nation end."

However, his neighbour Madhusudan Singh had a different take on events. "Kalau has seven daughters, who are all grown up now, but he always wanted a son. Thirty-five years ago, a seer told him that he would be blessed with a son if he refrained from bathing in water, so he stopped washing and started bathing in fire instead. At that time, he owned a grocery store, but the stench from his unclean habits soon drove all his customers away, so he has to make his living by farming instead. He's still hoping for a son, but his wife is well over sixty now, so I don't think his wish is ever going to come true." *(Hindustan Times, 13/5/09. Spotter: Keith Whittam)*



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 49

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

My plans for the reorganising of Britain after the next election are now marching ahead on all fronts.

First and foremost, we are all concerned with the need to provide proper care for our hard-working elderly British old people, who have selflessly devoted their lives to the service of the community.

It is their basic human right to be able to expect the state to provide for their every need in their twilight years, as they approach the end of their voting lives.

Comrades, I have seen the figures and they speak for themselves.

There are now 58 million senior comrades who are still sufficiently able-bodied to be able to fill in a postal vote.

It is surely incumbent on us to ensure that they are cared for in such a way as allows them to continue to exercise that inalienable right.

That is why I would like to see a full-scale national debate on the whole issue of Britain's senior voters in the decades to come.

The possible options to be discussed are as follows:

- A special hypothecated "grey tax" to be paid by every taxpayer, starting at a rate of £20,000 a year.
- The retirement age to be raised to 94, to enable retired comrades to remain working until they die.
- A state-funded nationwide programme to build Swiss-style "Dignity Centres", where the nation's hard-working old persons can choose a "rapid retirement plan" in the company of their loved ones (conditional, of course, on what Comrade Lord Falconer has rightly described as "suitable safeguards").

Having solved the problem of our old people, my thoughts naturally move on to solving the problem of global warming and Britain's need for much more sustainable energy.

Not, of course, that I am thinking of burning old people as a renewable energy source, though let me say that such a pilot scheme has already been proposed by Comrade Miliband.

This is, of course, in addition to the 25 million new wind turbines which Comrade Miliband proposes to build by the end of next week, many of them in your own garden.

These will be enough to supply Britain's energy needs well into the 28th Century, not to mention creating over a billion new "green jobs" for those elderly Comrades who have not exercised their right to be incinerated with dignity.

Yours,

Gordon Brown

Supreme Leader

From The 'Deputy' Supreme Leader, Comrade Lord Mandelson

IMPORTANT CHANGES IN COMRADE PEERAGE REGULATIONS

After consultation with Comrade Straw, Commissar for the Administration of Justice, I have decided to amend the regulations regarding The Comrades State Life Peerage, awarded to Comrades for outstanding contributions to the Party.

In future, it will be permissible for Comrade Lords to renounce these peerages should an opportunity arise where it would be appropriate – ie were it to be necessary to depose a Supreme Leader who had failed the nation, making it essential for a brilliant and talented Comrade Peer to step in and become Supreme Leader. Although this is a remote possibility, it is important to have the mechanism in place ready for next year.

Comrade Lord Mandelson

Motto: "Peer Today, Gordon Gone Tomorrow"

COMRADE BLAIR A Clarification

Comrades may have been surprised at the statement by Comrade Baroness Kinnock that the discredited and rightly hated former leader, ex-Comrade Blair, has the full backing of your present Supreme Leader in his bid to become the President of Europe.

Let me explain our position on this. The Presidency of Europe is a wholly meaningless and ceremonial title, whose holder has no power except in exercising the purely advisory role of telling the leaders of the various European nations what to do.

If it pleases ex-Comrade Blair to bid for this pointless and empty position simply to gratify his vanity and greed, we shall of course support him to the hilt.

I would like to make clear that my support for ex-Comrade Blair is in no way connected to any shady back-stairsist dealism arranged by Comrade Lord Mandelson, as has been suggested by the lying jackals of the Rothermere-ist Murdoch-ite press. **G.B**.

Supreme Leader Pledges New Equipment For Troops

The Supreme Leader has always made it clear that the nation's Comrade soldiers fighting in Afghanistan would be supplied with whatever equipment they needed (subject to availability).

That is why today we have placed an order for 300 "green helicopters" driven entirely by the windpower generated by their revolving blades.

These state-of-the-art carbon-friendly combat aircraft have a range of as much as 5 metres and an in-air troop-carrying capacity of one man (subject to availability of wind). Rest assured, Comrades, that very soon the war in Afghanistan will be over! G.B.

A Clarification by Comrade John Reid, formerly the Politburo's Defence Chief

"Comrades, when I said in 2006 that our troops in Afghanistan would return home 'without a shot being fired', this was a reference to our policy that they should not be supplied with guns or bullets. This was, therefore, a very reasonable remark to make about the on-going progress of the war." J.R.

The Fidelio Telegraph

Friday, July 24, 2009

Deaf Musician 'Ends It All With Dignity'

by Our Man In Switzerland **Lunchtime O'Basel**

THE leading Viennese conductor and composer, Ludwig van Beethoven, travelled to Switzerland to "die with dignity" after years of worsening health.

Sir Ludwig, one of the biggest names in European music, has battled for a long time with deafness, hepatitis and an inability to finish his tenth symphony.

"His demons were many," said a close friend, "and Sir Lud made a brave decision to end it all, while he was still in full possession of his faculties (apart, that is, from his hearing, his sight and various other ailments).

"I know that if he had had a wife, she would have been happy to pass on with him at the clinic."

The world of music was quick to pay tribute to the great maestro.

"Who is this Edward Downes?" they said. "We've never heard of him".

● Should Beethoven have been allowed to die with dignity? You decide.

If 'yes', text the word 'no' to 3456.

If 'no', text the word 'yes' to 5678.

KATE'S SHAME AT DODGY UNCLE

Deeply embarrassed

by Our Royal Staff
Rebekah Wadingthroughfilth

THE FAMILY of Kate Middleton is said to be hugely embarrassed by revelations concerning the black-sheep uncle of her boyfriend, Prince William, as revealed in the News of the World.

The paper has published details of the hedonistic lifestyle of William's playboy uncle, known in his circle as "Randy Andy", "Andy Airmiles" or "the Duke of Pork".

Gary Goldsmith

Andrew Windsor lives in a vulgar, 23-bedroom ranch-style villa near Slough known as "SouthYork" where he apparently entertains a succession of sleazy characters associated with his dodgy international businesses.

Said a spokesman for the Middletons: "This is bad news for Kate. She is a respectable girl and had been led to believe that Will's family were squeaky clean."

In fact, insiders say that this is bound to raise questions in Kate's mind as to whether she can continue her relationship with the Prince at all.

Full story and pix of seedy uncle page 94, plus transcript of his tapped phone calls... whoops...er...er... (You're fired, Ed)

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF MOON LANDING CONSPIRACY THEORY

THERE WERE celebrations right across the web today, as people commemorated July 22nd 1969 – the 40th anniversary of the first moon landing conspiracy theory.

"It was Huck Willoughby who stood up in the middle of a bar in Texas and said the whole thing had been cooked up on a sound stage in Burbank," said an over-excited nerd.

"Huck was the first man to point out that flags on the moon shouldn't flap in the wind. And he posted his suspicions on the door of his shed, because internet chat rooms wouldn't get invented for another thirty years."

That Alan Yentob BBC Xmas Lunch On Expenses Menu in full

Series of Turkeys with Plenty of Gravy

– ❋ –

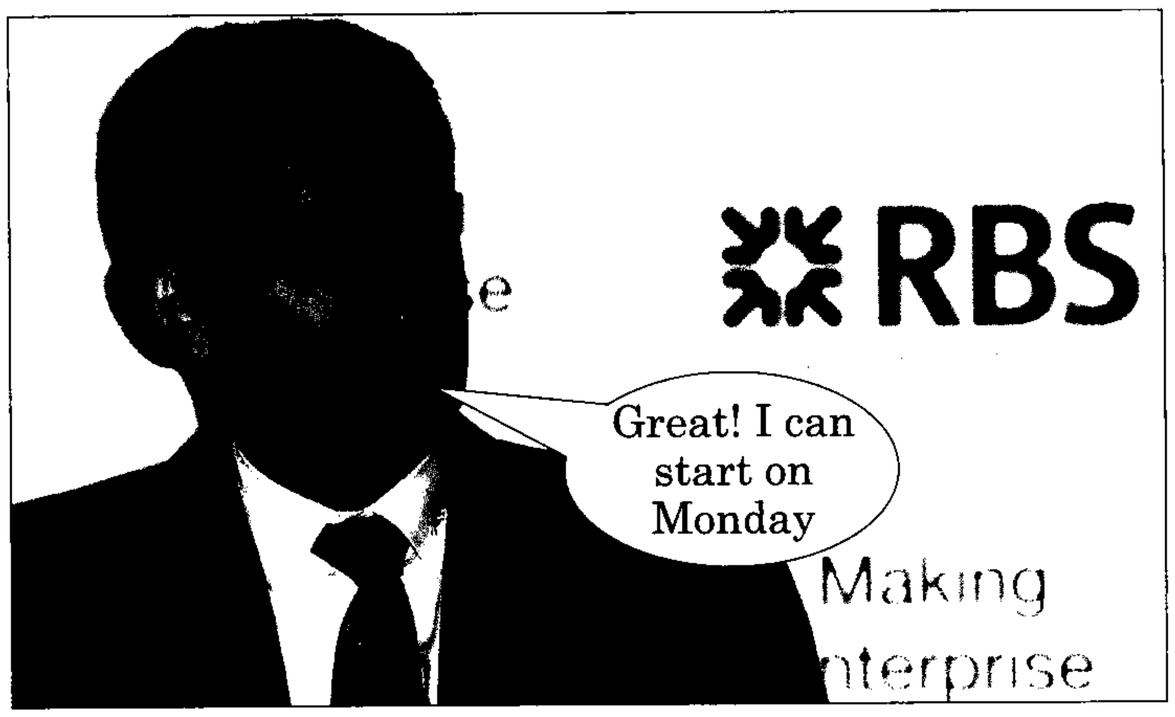
Beard and Butter-Up Pudding

– ❋ –

To Drink: *Botney's Red Barrel*

(That's enough Menu. Ed)

WALKER REPORT RECOMMENDS THAT ONLY EXPERIENCED BANKERS SHOULD SERVE AS NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS



BROWN'S UNWINNABLE WAR

by Our Military Staff
MAJOR ERROR

EXPERTS are now agreed that there is no way that Gordon Brown can win his long-running war against the Toriban.

"He has spent billions," said one, "but to no avail. And in the process, he has lost an awful lot of not very good men and some really useless women (*Is this right, Ed*?)"

Under their new leader, the charismatic Bore Lord Osama bin Cameron, the resurgent Toriban have mounted a series of devastating attacks, capturing a lot of ground previously held by Brown.

"Morale is terrible," said one Labour veteran. "We don't have the personnel or the equipment to beat the Toriban."

Said another Labour foot soldier, "There is no clear statement of what we are trying to do here. Are we just holding on or are we part of a surge? No one seems to know."

The Camerons are Coming

But a defiant Gordon Brown was unrepentant yesterday. "We cannot just cut and run," he said, "just because we can't win. Besides, in recent weeks we have made some dramatic progress – backwards.

"This will make it much easier for us to regroup and launch Operation Massive Defeat next year."

"This is where we put a stop to woodland burials!"

GLENDA SLAGG

Fleet Street's One And Only 'The Lady' (Geddit?)

■SPARE a thought for Arlene Phillips – the Come Dancing dame they cruelly dumped!??!? And for why?!! Just 'cos she's the wrong side of sixty!?!! Now I've heard it all!?! If Agein' Arlene was a fat old fella, the BBC wouldn't dare!??! But since she's a WOMAN, she's been booted out the door and some teenage totty has waltzed off with her job!!?! Here's Glenda's vote – Strictly Come Back, Arlene!!?!!

■WHY ALL THE FUSS??!?? Just 'cos some old bag has been given the heave-ho from her telly job on "Strictly", we're all meant to start a-weepin' and a-wailin'!?!! Let's face it – Arlene was never any good anyway, a-bitchin' and a-snitchin' like some sour old schoolmarm with swine flu!!?! Here's Glenda's vote – Tan-Go Away, Arlene!?!! And Strictly Don't Come Back!!?!

■SEEN BRUNO?!?? Don't bother!? Sacha Baron Cohen thinks he's the funniest geezer on the globe, a-poovin' and a-woovin' in his skin-tight lederhosen!?!! Well, I've got news for you, Sacha – you're about as funny as Michael Jackson's death!??!!

■SEEN BRUNO?!?? Don't miss it!!?! It's the craziest, campest comedy ever!!?! And Sacha Baron Cohen is *hilarious*, a-poovin' and a-woovin' in his skin-tight lederhosen!!?! I've got news for you, Sacha – you're even funnier than Michael Jackson's death!!?!

■HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Summer Holiday Hombres!?!

● **Hardeep Singh Kohl.** OK, so you've been suspended for acting improperly with a researcher on *The One Show*!?!! Sounds like a Sikh joke to me!!?! You won't be tur-banned from my place, so why don't you *Show* up and give me *One*!!?!

● **Sir Jock Stirrup**, Head of the Armed Forces. Come round and show me your chopper, Big Boy!!?! Attention!?!! (Geddit?!?)

● **Tom Watson.** Fore! Or should I say "Fwooarrr!" OK, so you're 59, but I don't mind the handicap!!?! Come on, Grandad, you can come round and watch this birdie any time!?!!?

Byeee!!

Gordon Brown's Tribute To Fallen Soldiers In Full

"THESE brave young men have made the ultimate sacrifice and, despite the fact that they never recorded a hit single or produced the fastest-selling album of all time or changed the face of popular music for ever, I still believe that their deaths are significant to millions of us.

Let us join together to mourn the sad loss of these soldiers who died without reaching their full potential.

They could very well have appeared having a racist strop on *Big Brother* or a blubbing meltdown on *Britain's Got Talent*, and could have had an individual and personal tribute from me, rather than this general one I'm doing now. *(That's enough. Ed.)*"

"And your idea of the last chance merger was disastrous!"

GOATS LEAVE SINKING SHIP

by Our Political Staff **Peter Obore**

THE captain of the Titanic, Gordon Brown, said yesterday that he was "very relaxed" about the abandoning of his ship by all the Goats whom he had brought on board to assist in the running of his liner into the iceberg.

In recent weeks the Goats (Government Of All the Twits) have jumped over the side rather than risk going down with Captain Brown.

Nanny State

Those Goats include:

● **Lord Digby-Useless, former Head of the NBG.**

● **Lord Malloch-Brownnose, former deputy head of the UNBG.**

● **Lord Darzehole, former high-flying Asian surgeon, brought in as expert on cuts.**

The only Goat still left on board is former admiral, Lord Westward of Ho, whose nautical experience has been invaluable in ensuring that the ship meets its navigational target, the iceberg.

Also still on board are a number of rats, chief among them Lord Mandelifeboats. *(That's enough rats and goats. Ed.)*

Nursery Times

Friday, July 24, 2009

CHILD CARER BARRED FOR REFUSING PAEDO TEST

by Our Criminal Records Staff **P.L. Travesty**

AN experienced London-based child-minder has been denied the right to work with children because she refused to be vetted by the new Independent Safeguarding Authority.

Ms Mary Poppins, 43, had been offered a post as nanny to an unemployed investment banker, Mr Banks, who had been laid off during the credit crunch.

When told that she could not be allowed to look after Child J and Child M unless she agreed to be checked out as a possible paedo, she said, "This is completely ridiculous and insulting."

The Home Office, however, insisted that its new measures were "supercalifragilistic-expialidocious" and were designed to end the evil of child abuse throughout the nursery world.

When told this, Ms Poppins opened her umbrella and flew away.

Duke Of York Promises 'Huge Surge' In Uphill Battle

THE Grand Old Duke Of York has pledged "as many men as are needed" for Operation Uphill and Downhill, currently under way in Helmand.

"I am talking about a very large increase in boots on the ground," said the Duke. "Possibly as many as ten men."

Advertisement

Moo Walk – How the Moon Ruined My Life

by Buzz Cow

NEW book by world-famous bovine space star recounts its excitement during the first lunar mission – "One small step for a cow, but a giant leap for cowkind" – and its subsequent disillusion as nothing in its life lives up to that historic moment.

"I laughed and laughed to see such fun" – *The Little Dog, Barking Times*

ON OTHER PAGES ● World's oldest mum dies, leaving children orphaned in shoe **2** ● Old Mother Hubbard forced to sell cupboard to pay for care home **3** ● "Me And My Spoon" by The Dish **94**

"Bravo, young man! You remind me of myself when I was your age"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Frank McCourt. Author of *Angela's Ashes*

So. Farewell
Then
Frank McCourt

Now it
Will be
Frank's Ashes.

That are
Making the headlines

Assuming, that is,
That he is
Cremated.

If not I
Ask readers
To forget
The above.

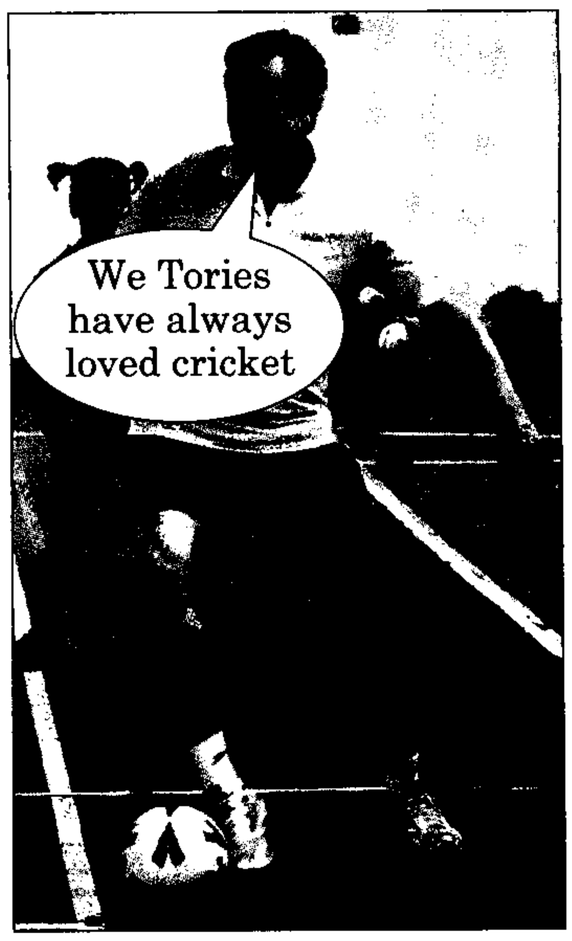
And imagine
That I wrote
About Henry Allingham

The 113-year-old
First World War
Veteran,
Instead.

E.J. Thribb (117½)

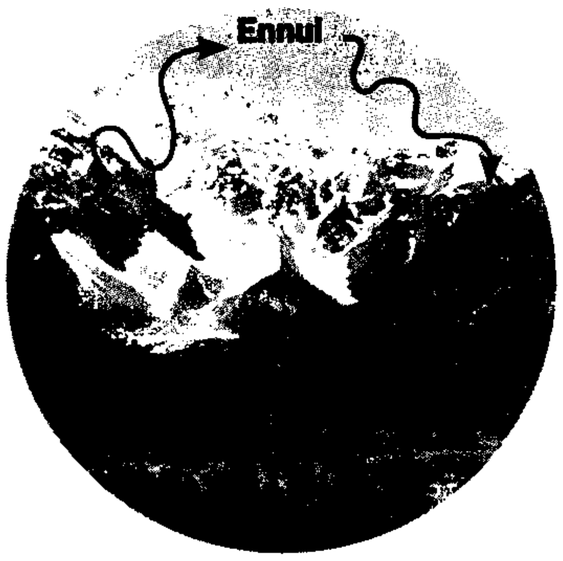
HISTORIC DAY
MEN WIN CRICKET MATCH

TODAY some men won a cricket match against some other men *(Reuters)*



"THE BORE" DE FRANCE

TODAY'S ROUTE



THE BROON-ITES
THE TRAITOROUS TARTAN TERRORS TROUNCING THE TROOPS!
Fountain and Jamieson
PA BROON! WE NEED SOME MAIR HELICOPTERS 'AN PRONTO!
PA BROON'S OFFICE
JINGS AND CRIVVENS!
DIGNITAS SWISS HOLIDAYS '09' REALLY GET AWA' FRAE IT ALL
HENRY DAVIES
AH TOLE YE BEFORE, JOCK AINSWORTH, YE CANNAE HA' ANY MAIR HELICOPTERS FOR YON TROOPS!
WHO SAID ANYTHIN' ABOOT TH' TROOPS?
JINGS! AH KEN WHIT YE'RE SAYIN'. WE NEED MAIR HELICOPTERS RICHT NOO!
BROON OOT THE NOO!
LABOUR OOT!
DOON WI' BROON!

SOLDIERS DIE IN WAR SHOCK

A NUMBER of British troops have been killed fighting in a war, the Ministry of Defence announced today.

Said a Ministry spokesman, "We deeply regret this shocking event. It is not the kind of thing you expect when you send soldiers off to fight."

ON OTHER PAGES

■Should soldiers be sent off to fight in wars? You decide. Just text your verdict to 1357.

G8

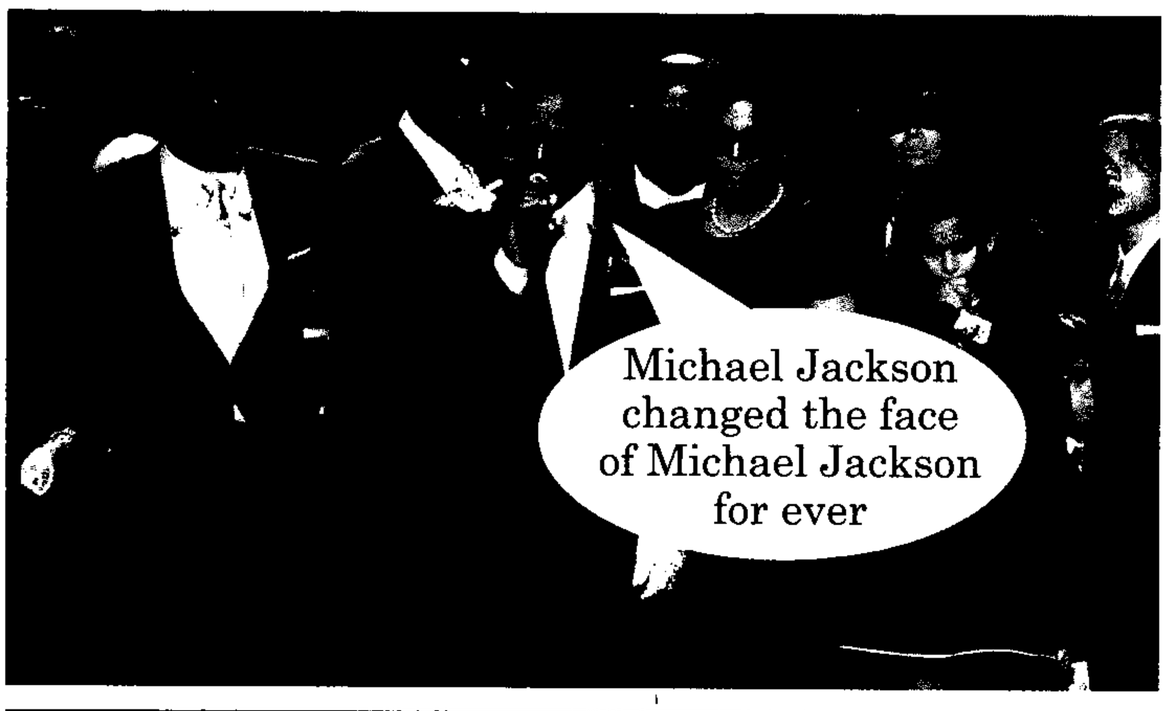
World Leaders Reach Historic Agreement to Halt Global Warming

L'Aquila, Wednesday

THE WORLD's top leaders have all agreed that in order to stop global warming they will have another historic meeting next year to discuss the meeting the year after that.

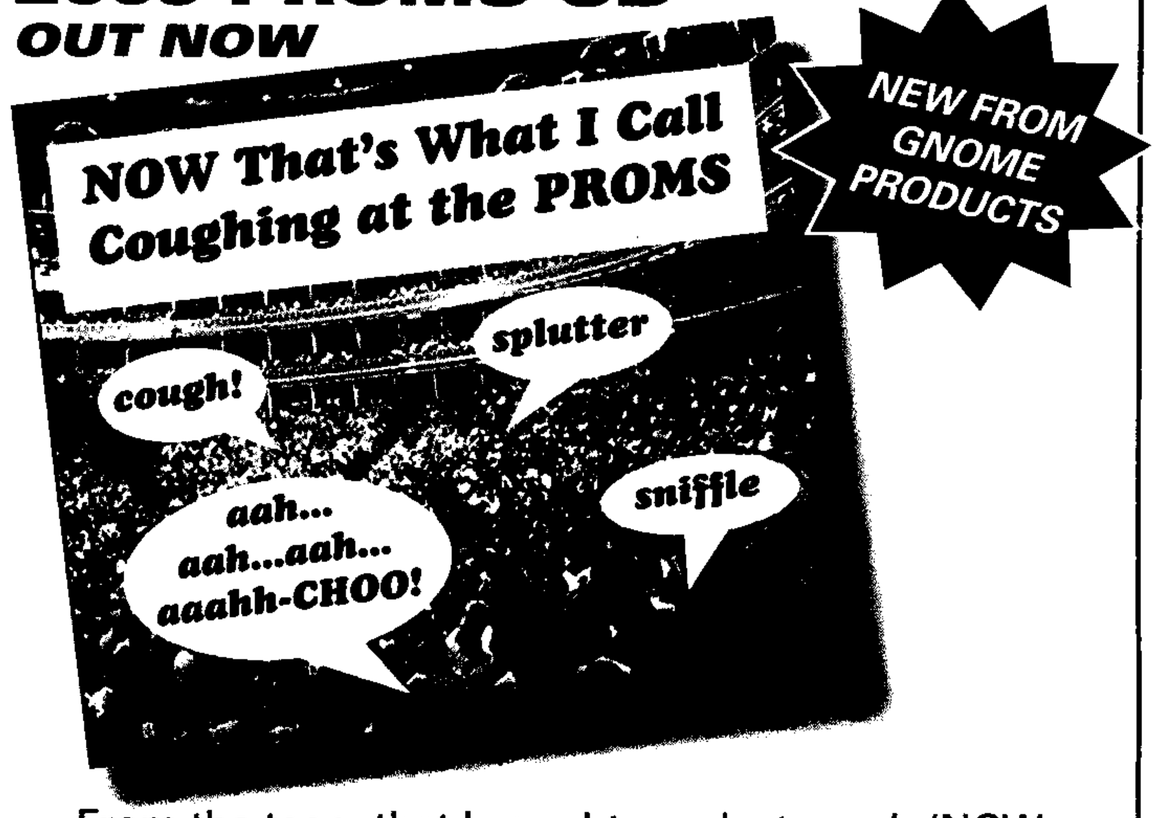
"How come they're all sitting down at the table together?"

FAMILY PAYS TRIBUTE AT STAR-STUDDED JACKSON MEMORIAL


Michael Jackson changed the face of Michael Jackson for ever
MICHAEL JACKSON'S DEATH
Jackson's 'Number Ones' album tops UK chart
BBC NEWS 19:13 DOCTOR WHO WAS WITH HIM WHEN HE DIED

ADERTISEMENT

2009 PROMS CD
OUT NOW



From the team that brought you last year's 'NOW That's What I Call Great Mobile Ring-Tones in the Middle of the Music', comes a new collection of over 2 hours of music – ruined by our specialist coughers and splutterers, who have the unerring knack of saving their best sneezes and throat-clearing grunts for the quiet bits of EVERY piece.

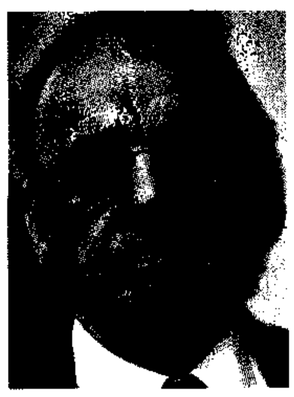
● ***Artists featured include:*** Tchaicoughsky, Rachmanicough and Rimsky Korsa-Cough, and there'll probably be an opera by Offencough.

Other titles in the series: Now That's What I Call Clapping Before the Piece Ends 3

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

IT'S JOLLY EMBARRASSING - ANDY COULSON WORKING FOR US
EMBARRASSING FOR HIM! IT COULD RUIN HIS REPUTATION!!!
YES, IT'S DAVE SNOOPY AND HIS CHUMS!
READER'S VOICE
I'M PREPARED TO GIVE PEOPLE A SECOND CHANCE
THAT'S GOOD NEWS FOR GORDON!
SNOOPY TOWERS
RED TOP HATS OFF TO DAVE AND HIS EMBARRASSING CHUMS!
YIKES! IMAGINE IF ANDY TAPPED INTO OUR PHONES...
HELLO DON'TCHA KNOW MR MURDOCH! LICK!! SLURP!!!
DON'T WORRY DAVE - THEY ONLY GO FOR CELEBS, NOT WANNABES!

THE DAILY MAIL SAYS



SAVE THIS POOR HACKER FROM PRISON

THE WHOLE nation is backing the Mail in its campaign to save a poor deluded hacker from being extradited from America and tried in the notorious British courts.

Rupert, 78, admits illegally hacking into the mobile phones of celebrities, politicians and Royals over a long period in his desperate search for a story he could put into his pathetic newspaper, the News of the World.

Doctors who have examined Rupert describe him as "just a sad fantasist, bordering on the autistic, imprisoned by his obsessions"

Rupert's devoted not-very-longtime partner Wendy Dung said last night, "It would be so unfair to put my Loopie in gaol, just because he publishes a lot of pornographic drivel in his newspapers."

"I need him here at home so that I can make sure that he takes a lot of exercise 24 hours a day and keeps his will up to date.'

Now you too can join the campaign to save Loopy Rupi by writing to the Home Secretary, whoever he or she may be at the time of writing.

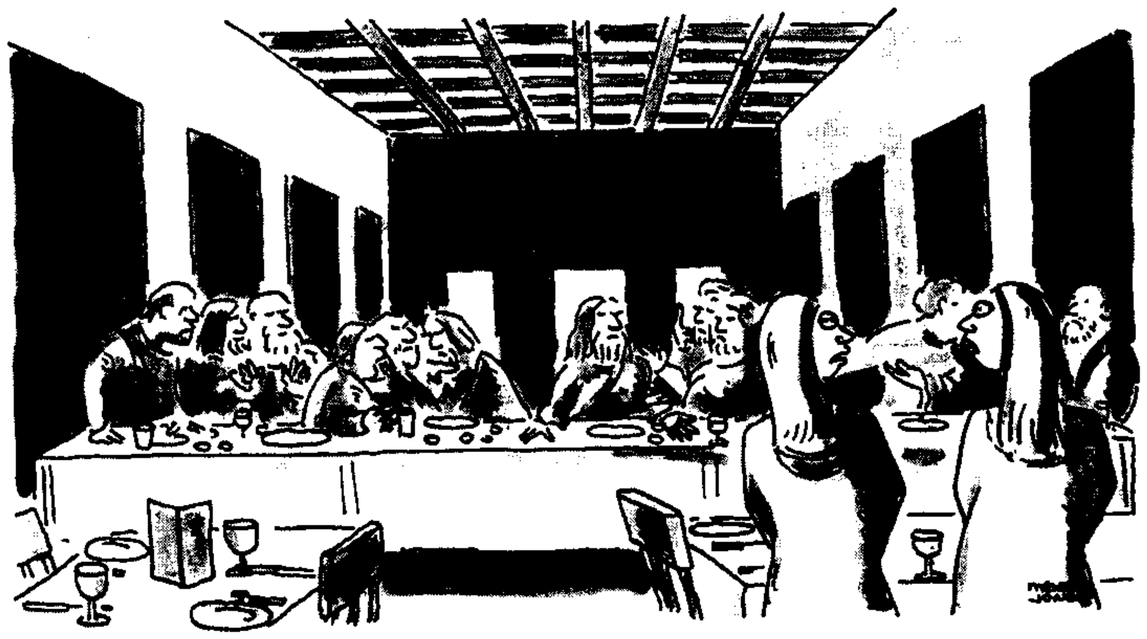
HOW TO SAVE HACKER MURDOCH

Dear Mr Johnson (or it may Lord Mandelson by the time this reaches you, or possibly Mr Balls or even Lord Adonis).

I am very worried about the possibility of Rupert being unjustly extradited and thrown into a stinking British gaol until he dies, with nothing to read but the Sun.

Signed.....

☐ **I am over 18 and work for News International**



"Let's eat somewhere else. It's a bit too blokey in here"

Advertisement

THE NEW

NOKIA-COULSON 300

Keep in touch with hundreds of politicians and celebrities you've never met with the new 'Nokia-Coulson 300'.

This phone gives you unprecedented connectivity using ground-breaking HACK technology and you can reduce your monthly bills by signing onto our 'not friends and nothing to do with my family' package.

Choose either a fixed contract offering 300 free phone and text intercepts a month or the flexibility of 'hack-as-you-go' with double stitch-ups exclusively from the News of the World.

With an impressive battery life of over 300 hours, this phone is bound to last longer than Andy will as the Conservatives' Director of Communication.

The Nokia-Coulson 300 – It's good to stalk

News in Brief

CELEBRITY OUTRAGE

HUNDREDS of high profile celebrities, including Stephen Fry and Jonathan Ross, said they were horrified last night to learn that News International had been intercepting their electronic communications.

"Every time we post some inane twaddle on Twitter, the very next day it's reprinted verbatim by lazy hacks in the showbiz pages of *The Sun* or the *News of the Screws*," said *(cont. p. 94)*

Thought For The Day

by The Rev. A.N. Wislon

YOU KNOW, when I heard the news that the BBC's *'Thought for the Day'* slot might be opened up to non-believers, my first thought was, "I wonder whether the Daily Mail will ring me up and offer me a lot of money to write about it?" And, you know, in a very real sense, I was right.

© Daily Mail Why Oh Why Productions

● Was Andrew Wilson right to accept the money? Text 8253 for 'Yes', 9876 for 'No' and 6666 for 'I haven't got a thought in my head, but I'd like to share it with you anyway'.

Who would you like to hear on the new-look non-religious Thought For The Day?

Professor Richard Dawkins

What he might say

"God – what a bastard! And he doesn't even exist."

Jonathan Ross

What he might say

"There's nothing in f****** life that can't be solved by having a good w**k."

Sir Stephen Fry

What he might say

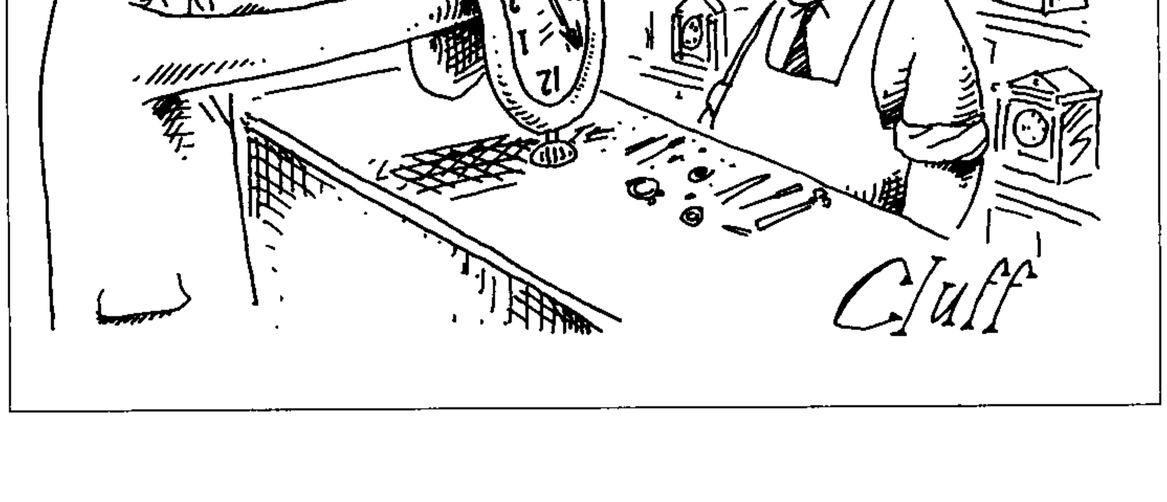
"Bless!"

Mohammed Al-Fayed

What he might say

"Fug this for a game of fuggin' soldiers"

(That's enough non-religious Thoughts For The Day, Ed.)



HEADMASTER LASHES CHARITY COMMISSION

'Our only purpose is to serve community,' says Kipling

by Our Education Staff **Conrad Blackboard**

THE headmaster of the prestigious £64,000-a-term independent school St Cakes (motto: "Quis paget entrat") last night hit out at the Charity Commission for what he called "a politically motivated act of spite".

He was responding to the Commission's suggestion that St Cakes should lose its tax-exempt status after failing to provide sufficient benefits to the "wider community".

Said Mr Kipling, "This is ridiculous. St Cakes has a long and honourable record in serving any number of wider communities – the Russian oligarch community, the hedge fund community, the Chinese business community, and the African dictatorship community, to name but a few.

"Besides which, our school facilities have always been available to our local community. The squash courts, for example, can be hired out by anyone for a token charge of only £600 an hour during the hours between midnight at 5 a.m. (The key can be obtained from the Bursar, Major B. Ecclestone).

"So, to suggest that we should not enjoy 100 per cent tax relief is like saying that Mrs Kipling and I should not be entitled to our yearly three-month summer cruise around the Caribbean as a small token of all the work we put in to assist our participating stakeholders in the communities of which I speak."

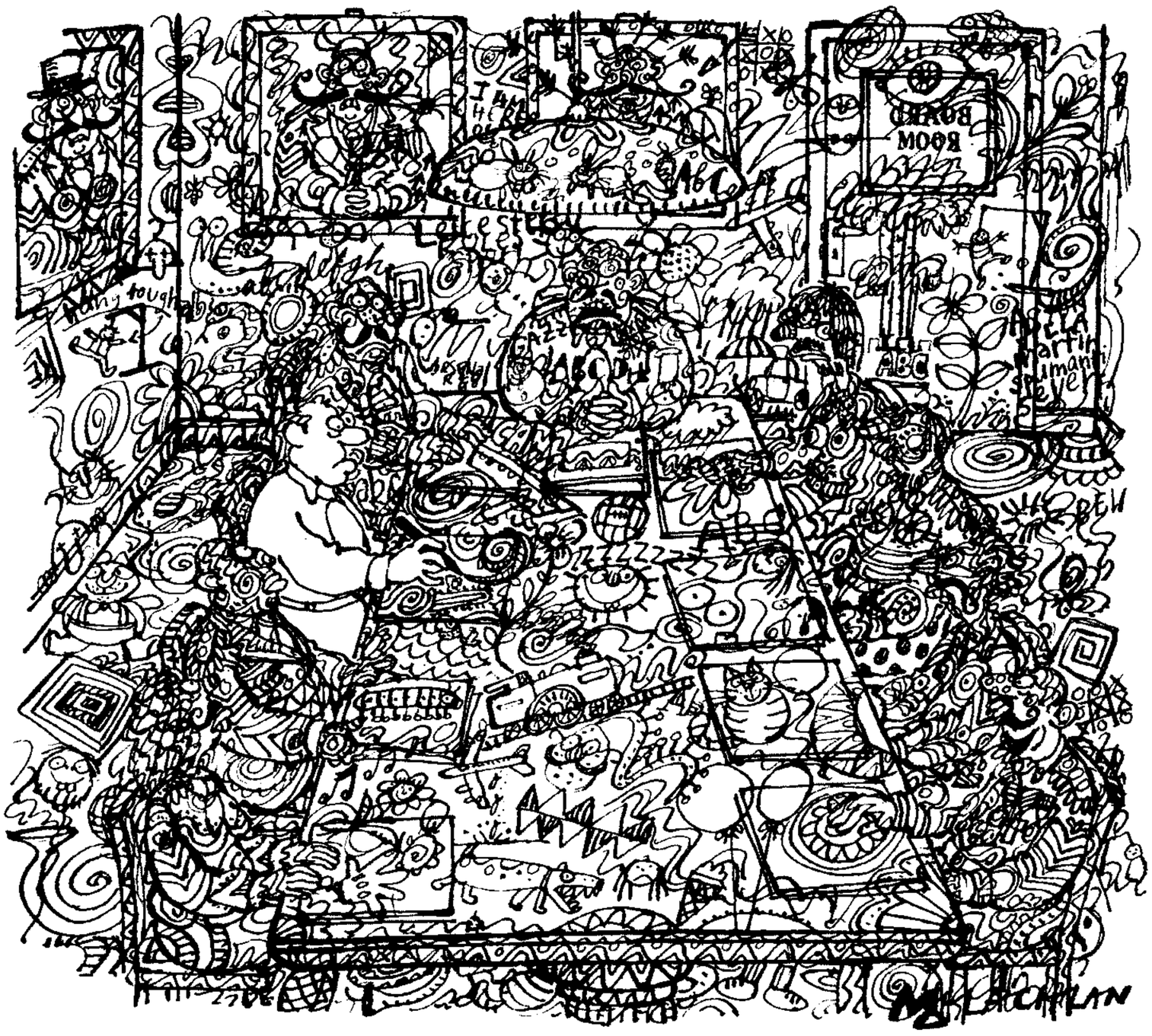
News of Old Cakeians

M.V.Q. Onanugu *(Trousers 1971-1975)* has recently headed a military coup in Rumbabwe (formerly British Rumbabaland) and now holds the office of Supreme Life President and Commander-in-Chief. 'Monty' would like to make contact with any Old Cakeians who happen to be passing through Onanuguville (formerly Palmerston).

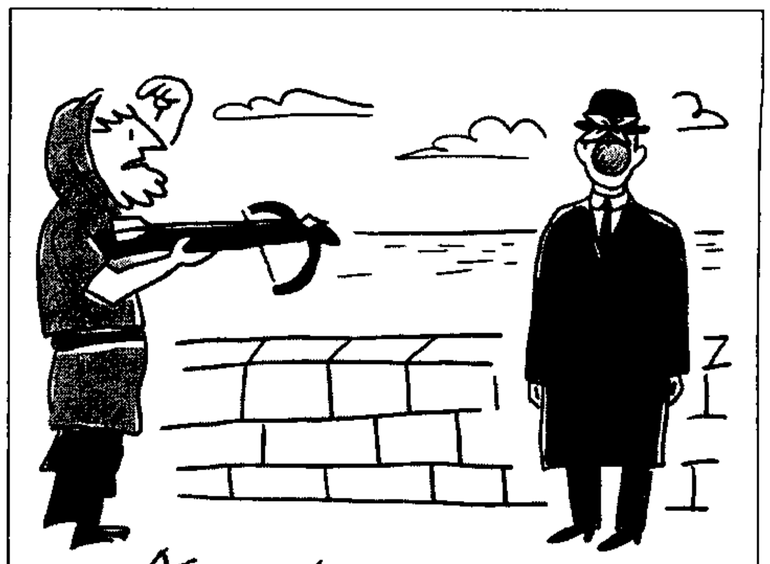
L.J.B. Smelt-Harris *(Smokers, 1968-1971)* tells us that he is serving a five-year sentence for fraud at the Barratt Open Prison in Fife, where he was delighted to run into fellow Old Cakeian, **R.B. St J. Halloran** *(Sliders, 1968-9)*.

P.M. Brownlow *(Custards, 1991-1996)* wonders if he is the first Old Cakeian to marry another O.C. in a civil partnership. The "happy event" took place at the Chatsworth Court Hotel, Eastbourne, on January 7, 2009, when "Bunty" Brownlow and **C.J.R. Malfeasance** *(Pringles, 1996-2001)* "tied the knot".

P.M.D. Frossett (née **Mitchell-Webb**) *(Nightingale's 2000-2004)* has been appointed manageress of the Madame Provocateuse Adult Emporium in Bicester. Prunella is happy to offer a 10% discount to all Old Cakeians!



"Are we boring you, Mr Etherington?"



*"**On** your head..."*

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Heroes return

How depressing to see the people of Wootton Bassett line the streets once again. Most were able-bodied, yet they would rather gawp at coffins than do an honest day's work. Those with jobs should be sacked for absenteeism and the rest should lose their benefits. – ***Jon***

so calld griever's all live local an dont even have to travle ● its like the london marathan 2 them ●● scum – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

I for one was proud to pay my respects, and I did so on the plinth in Trafalgar Square. My original intention had been to protest about police brutality, so my usual costume (a giant finger symbolising the wagging finger of the nanny state) was adapted to resemble a "riot cop". (Shaft swathed in black paper, with a helmet at the top.) In the event, my slot coincided with the procession in Wootton Bassett, so instead of reading from my new pamphlet, I decided to pay tribute to the fallen servicemen by standing erect in dignified silence. Walking down Old Compton Street afterwards, helmet and shaft extant, I was surprised to find myself greeted like a returning hero. Alas, it transpired that my tribute had been grossly misrepresented by my enemies in the media, resulting in an unfortunate misunderstanding. I hope this sets the record straight. – ***Edwin***

lovin them clips on youtube bruv – ***Zaks_back***

As a mother of young children, it worries me that people stand on the plinth with nothing but a net between them and the public. A single terrorist with swine flu could infect hundreds of innocent people in this way. – ***Emily***

not bein funny but r muslim's allow-ed have swine flu if pig's against there religen? – ***Hayley_321***

Time to end the disastrous democratic experiment. – ***Sword_of_Truth***

ASHES

JACKSON'S BODY IS CENTRE STAGE

Evening Standard

SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

- A glimpse of ancient dying stars

ENTERTAINMENT

- Mystery surrounds Jackson burial

BBC News website

DIARY

PIERS MORGAN MEETS KATIE PRICE

Piers Morgan: It was the celebrity fairy-tale romance that gripped the nation. The nation was gripped by the celebrity romance that at times seemed just like a fairy tale. The romance between two fairy-tale celebrities had the nation in its grip.

Five years later, reality hit hard.

The fairy-tale celebrity romance that had gripped the nation had now hit the rocks. And I wanted to know why.

Their bitter split grabbed all the headlines and hooked a nation. But is there more to this most public of separations? A fearful nation is demanding to know.

Now Katie Price – otherwise known as top model Jordan – is ready to open her heart in her own kitchen and spill it over her multi-million pound luxury mansion.

Katie, first question – how are you feeling?

Katie Price: I'm in a really really good place Piers I'm like so in a really good place I'm really really focused I'm like so focused.

Piers Morgan: How are you feeling?

Katie Price: Like I say I'm in a really good place.

Piers Morgan: And how are you feeling?

Katie Price: To be honest I'm in a really good place I'm really focused I'm like so focused.

Piers Morgan: And let me ask you a question I think everyone, the whole nation, everyone in the world, will want to know the answer to. It's a question I know is on the lips of the universe. Katie – how are you feeling?

Katie Price: I'm in a really good place Piers.

Piers Morgan: And – I'm sorry but I have to ask this – how are you feeling?

Katie Price: I'm like –

Piers Morgan: Take your time, Katie.

Katie Price: – I'm like so so focused I'm like so in a really good place.

Piers Morgan: It was what the nation had been waiting to hear, but still it came as a seismic shock, even to me. Katie Price – also known as top glamour model Jordan – was in a really good place. And – perhaps above all – focused. But there were still more questions that I just had to put to her as she stood on the media tightrope, pouring her heart out.

Katie, I've just got to ask you this. How do you feel?

Katie Price: Peter's moved out he's like so moved out at the end of the day he's moved out tell me about it he's not taken nothing mind at the end of the day all he took was his coffee machine and he can keep that for all I care at the end of the day.

Piers Morgan: And how do you feel?

Katie Price: At the end of the day it's just a coffee machine it's so just a coffee machine he like uses it to make coffee and he can carry on using it to make coffee for all I care at the end of the day tell me about it.

Piers Morgan: And how does that make you feel?

Katie Price: I don't care what he says at the end of the day it's just coffee you put boil it up you put it in a cup you drink it you wash it up it's like tea, only with like coffee instead of tea like with tea you boil it up you put it in a cup, you drink it you wash it up so get over it I've washed up I've moved on I'm like so over it my head's in a good place you've got to be yourself.

Piers Morgan: And how are you feeling?

Katie Price: I've like not told this to anyone before now because it's like private and you've got to like respect people's privates but the whole thing about secrets is you've got to tell them to everyone so they're no longer like secrets because once you've told someone then a secret's not a secret anymore so you can't really still call it a secret because then it's not in which case you're allowed to tell it let's get real Piers.

*****

Piers Morgan: And how are you... feeling?

Katie Price: I've so not told anyone this before but the thing is sometimes I want to like take my clothes off I have a glass then I want to take my clothes off what's wrong with that so when I'm with my mates guess what I want to let my hair down and my pants my hair and my pants and my top my hair and my pants and my top what's wrong with that if you can't take all your clothes off in public then what can you do that's what I want to know.

Piers Morgan: And how does it make you... feel?

Katie Price: My boobs are my own business they're together twenty four seven if Pete wants to leave them well that's up to him.

Piers Morgan: Take your time.

Katie Price: Bare with me.

Piers Morgan: Your boobs, Katie. How are they feeling?

Katie Price: They're in a good place they're really focused they've so talked it over they work as a team. Say what you like they got respect for each other I say to them let's get round a table and talk it over if Pete doesn't like them goin' clubbin and havin a bit of fun well then that's up to Pete at the end of the day it's the children they're concerned about their concern is for the children one hundred and ten per cent tell me about it so if they want to go out and have a bit of fun then I've got to be honest with you I'm not going to stop them.

*****

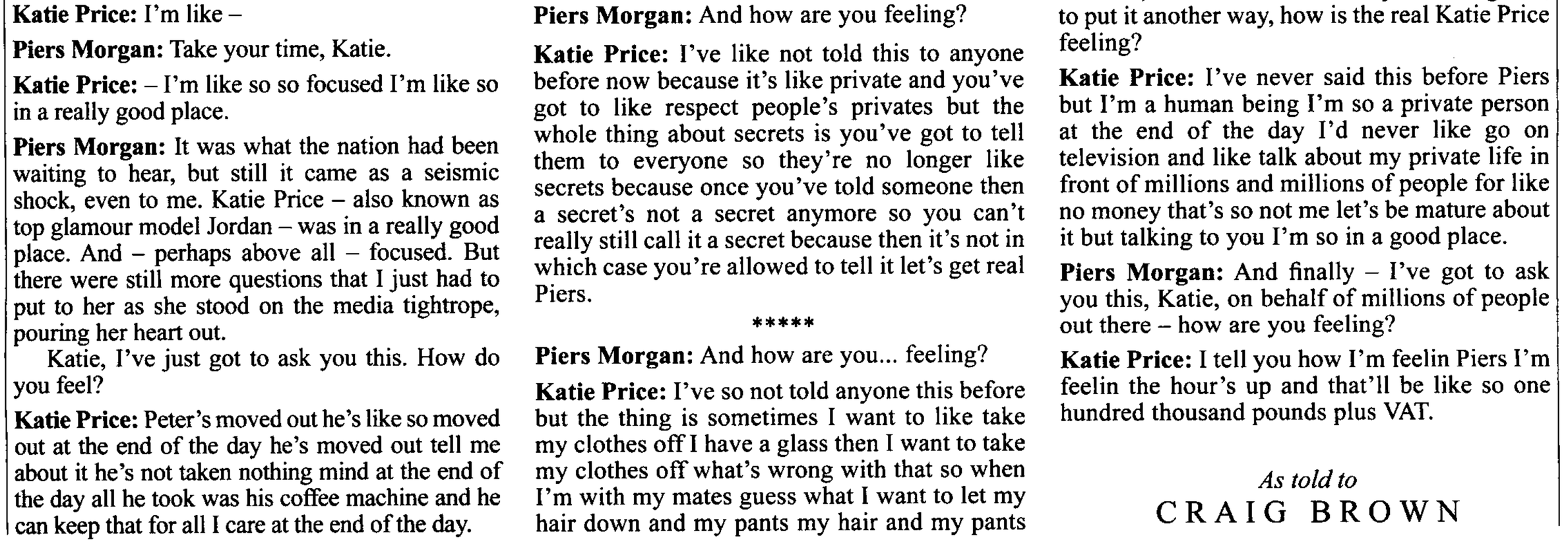
Piers Morgan: OK. Now, let's talk about *YOU*. I've known you a long time, Katie, and I know you to be a strong-willed independent passionate highly intelligent essentially very very private woman. At a time when the whole world as we know it is undergoing a very serious economic downturn, and with the threat of world wars and terrorism never far away, there's one thing that everyone is really wanting to know, and it's this. How are you feeling? Or, to put it another way, how is the real Katie Price feeling?

Katie Price: I've never said this before Piers but I'm a human being I'm so a private person at the end of the day I'd never like go on television and like talk about my private life in front of millions and millions of people for like no money that's so not me let's be mature about it but talking to you I'm so in a good place.

Piers Morgan: And finally – I've got to ask you this, Katie, on behalf of millions of people out there – how are you feeling?

Katie Price: I tell you how I'm feelin Piers I'm feelin the hour's up and that'll be like so one hundred thousand pounds plus VAT.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN


I'VE DONE A BIT OF MODELLING, SOME TV PRESENTING AND A BIT OF FASHION DESIGN...
BUT I'M STILL DECIDING WHERE TO FOCUS MY CAREER REALLY FOR SUCCESS AND MONEY AND THAT...
SO WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS MATERIALISTIC, PIXIE FROU-FROU?
UM... MATERIAL THINGS AREN'T THAT IMPORTANT TO ME...
ALTHOUGH I'M REALLY INTO NYLON SILK AND PVC RIGHT NOW...

Literary Review

It groans on you

The Angel's Game

Carlos Ruiz Zafón
(trans. Lucia Graves)
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £18.99)

WHEN a writer writes about writing, it is usually a sign that he is spending too much time in his study, and running out of things to say. The resulting novel will tend to feature one of three main anxieties: writer's block, plagiarism or prostitution of talent.

With *The Angel's Game*, Carlos Ruiz Zafón manages to cram in all three, along with a load of old fashioned mystery thriller schlock, some routine love interest, a hard boiled detective story and a slice of sub-Borgesian speculation, to produce a novel that simply teems with second-hand ideas and groans under the weight of its own absurdity.

The novel is set in Barcelona during the 1920s, where the narrator, David Martín, has made a name for himself writing sensational penny dreadfuls. Unfortunately, the name he has made is a pseudonym, Ignatius B Samson, and he is condemned to deliver 200 pages of schlock per month under a long-term contract with a publishing firm run by two partners, one of whom comes from the sausage industry, and the other is a former undertaker.

Martín yearns to be a proper literary writer like his aristocratic friend and mentor, Don Pedro Vidal. He is also in love with Cristina, the daughter of Vidal's chauffeur. Unfortunately, she appears to think he has prostituted his talent. But then she offers him the chance to redeem himself by secretly helping Vidal over his writer's block. Under the guise of doing his typing, Cristina takes Vidal's uncompleted manuscript and gets Martín to rewrite it. Vidal's book is published to great acclaim, unlike the novel Martín publishes under his own name, which bombs. Then to cap it all Cristina abandons Martín for Vidal and the happy couple lord it over their literary salon while Martín is diagnosed with a brain tumour. (Oh the unfairness of it all.)

His health and vanity suitably damaged, Martín is easy prey for a mysterious visitor, Andreas Corelli, from a Parisian publishing outfit called Editions de la Lumière, who promises him the world, or at any rate loads of money and a chance to be free of his existing punitive contract, if he will ghostwrite a certain book for him. Martín is tempted by this literary version of the Faustian pact, but fears he cannot fulfil the commission. The purpose of the book is to create a new religion, one that will sow fear and loathing in men's hearts and bring about violence and destruction.

Obviously the "angel" is really the devil, and the writer will not just be prostituting his talent but giving up his soul. Unfortunately he is already in too deep, and the fact that he has moved into a rambling old house with a gothic tower and a mysterious locked room doesn't help. Nor does the fact that his former publishers die in mysterious circumstances, and lots of nasty things start happening to everyone else he knows. Meanwhile his cancer mysteriously cures itself.

Soon the police are on his trail, accusing him of murder, and he is on the trail of the previous occupant of the haunted old house, who seems to have got involved with the mysterious Mr Corelli in a former life. To find inspiration for the book he is supposed to be writing, Martín visits the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, a Borgesian library of rejected manuscripts, where he finds what appears to be his predecessor's attempt to fulfil Corelli's commission. Soon he is plagiarising its contents.

And so it goes. Nothing is what it seems and no one is who they say they are. (Before long they are all dead anyway, so perhaps it doesn't matter.) And what's that strange creaking sound? Just the plot collapsing in on itself after 400 pages.

Zafón's earlier novel, *The Shadow of the Wind*, was a runaway bestseller in English and *The Angel's Game* is apparently the fastest selling book in Spanish publishing history. That's some achievement; but it would be nice if it were more original and didn't so obviously trumpet its author's anxieties about the business of writing in the wake of his earlier success.

"You need to start at the bottom to get anywhere in this business, son"

Rabbit stew

DE MORTUIS, nil nisi bonum always used to be one of the great maxims of lit-crit: say nothing but nice things about the dead. How curious that this adage should not only have been recently overthrown, but that its sacrificial victim should be the previously untouchable figure of the late John Updike.

While he lived, Updike always received the gentlest imaginable treatment from reviewers, no matter how dreary his novels became. As late as *Villages* (2005), an irksome saunter around the theme of septuagenarian bonking, Ian McEwan could be found remarking that here, clearly, was one of the greatest talents on the international block, while Blake Morrison took up columns of the *Guardian* to abase himself in our man's titanic shadow.

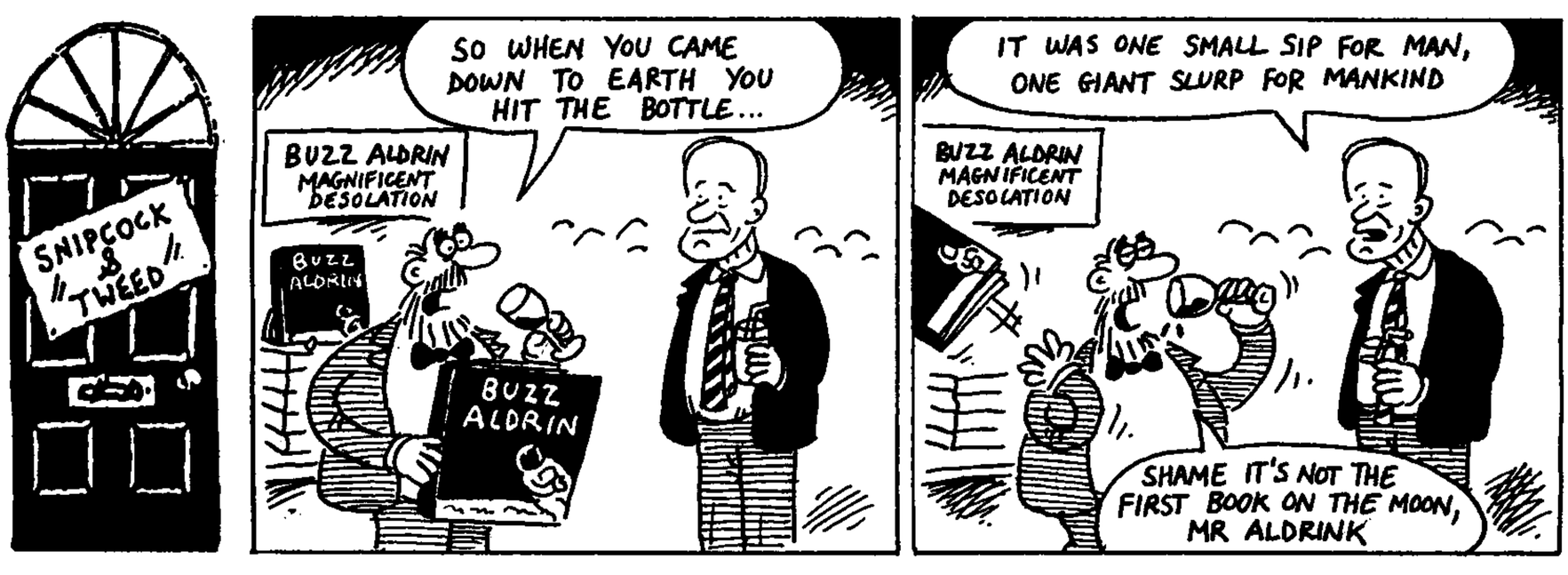
And always in the margins there lurked Martin Amis: rapt, Updike-fixated Mart, whose *The War Against Cliché* (2001) contains reviews of no fewer than five Updike items, at least four of which are as hot as boiling tar.

Come Updike's death and the posthumous publication of *My Father's Tears and Other Stories* and *Endpoint and Other Poems* (Hamish Hamilton £17.99 and £12.99), you might reasonably have assumed the mixture would be repeated as before. Not at all. What several of the reviewers really wanted to do, it turned out, was to snipe. "Let's not be sentimental," the *New York Review of Books* staffer Charles Harvey urged readers of the *TLS*, "these two books... provide little cause for celebration. To praise them simply because their author died recently would be a misplaced homage: everyone knows he can do better than *this*."

But what about Mart? Surely Mart would come good with a writer on whom in the last three decades he calculates he has published "about 15,000 words of more or less unqualified praise"? Well, no, now you come to mention it. Mart's immensely schoolmasterly *Guardian* review began with the statement: "The following wedge of prose has two things wrong with it: one big thing and one little thing – one infelicity and one howler. Read it with attention. If you can spot both, then you have what is called a literary ear."

Having patronised his readers, Mart went on to patronise Updike himself: "Readers must now prepare themselves for quotation, and a blizzard of false quantities – by which I mean rhymes and chimes and inadvertent repetitions, those toe-stubs, those excrescences and asperities that all writers hope to expunge from their work..." Updike's prose has apparently "lost its compass". Instead of reading his sentences in a spirit of "incredulous admiration", now you re-read them wondering "what they mean, or why they're there, or how they survived composition, routine reappraisal and proof-checking without causing a spasm of horrified self-correction."

Ouch! Despite all the stuff about Updike's achievement remaining immortal ("perhaps the greatest virtuoso stylist since Nabokov") what *is* going on here? The real give-away, alas, is a line that runs "This piece would have gone unwritten if its subject were still alive." I never thought to see feisty old Mart turn quite so pusillanimous. What that sentence means is that Mart knew about his hero's late-period decline but didn't fancy saying so to his face. Honesty, you see, is a question of someone not being there to dispute it. Pre-death we had the cosy little stitch-up; post-death comes the no-nonsense reckoning. It's difficult to work out which response is the more feeble.


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
SO WHEN YOU CAME DOWN TO EARTH YOU HIT THE BOTTLE...
BUZZ ALDRIN MAGNIFICENT DESOLATION
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IT WAS ONE SMALL SIP FOR MAN, ONE GIANT SLURP FOR MANKIND
BUZZ ALDRIN MAGNIFICENT DESOLATION
SHAME IT'S NOT THE FIRST BOOK ON THE MOON, MR ALDRINK

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£1m Payment by Little, Brown to Cherie Blair for *Speaking for Myself: The Autobiography* published last year

£1 Price hardback copies are retailing at in Poundland

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ SO. Farewell then Helen Fraser, stepping down as managing director of Penguin to make way for younger talent. "I have turned 60, my senior team are all in their forties, and I feel they need the kind of run I have been lucky enough to have, in order to shape Penguin for the future," she announced graciously last week.

This is not, apparently, a concern of her ultimate boss, Pearson CEO Marjorie Scardino, who is two years over the state pension age already and shows no sign of giving up her £2.06m pay packet just yet. One hundred of Penguin's staff, meanwhile, have no such choice, having been told they are being made redundant to save costs – coincidentally in the same week that imprint Hamish Hamilton splashed out £1.7m on Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Girl*, the sequel to his 1994 doorstopper *A Suitable Boy*, which set Orion back a mere £250,000.

Fraser will be replaced by her protégé Tom Weldon, which should put paid to any thoughts he might have had about the vacancy left over at Random House after group managing director Peter Bowron's sudden death (his responsibilities have been shared out among colleagues in what the company describes as an "interim" arrangement). "He's bright and he's been very successful at making money, but somewhat lacking in the way he handles staff," was the opinion of a former colleague last week. That was certainly the impression given by Weldon's first email to agents, in which he failed to mention the redundancies which have literally decimated the staff, even though they were announced alongside his own promotion a mere 24 hours before.

■ JUST published by Harriman House is *Eyewitness: The Rise and Fall of Dorling Kindersley*, an account of the colourful history of the illustrated reference publisher, written by its former global publisher, Christopher Davis.

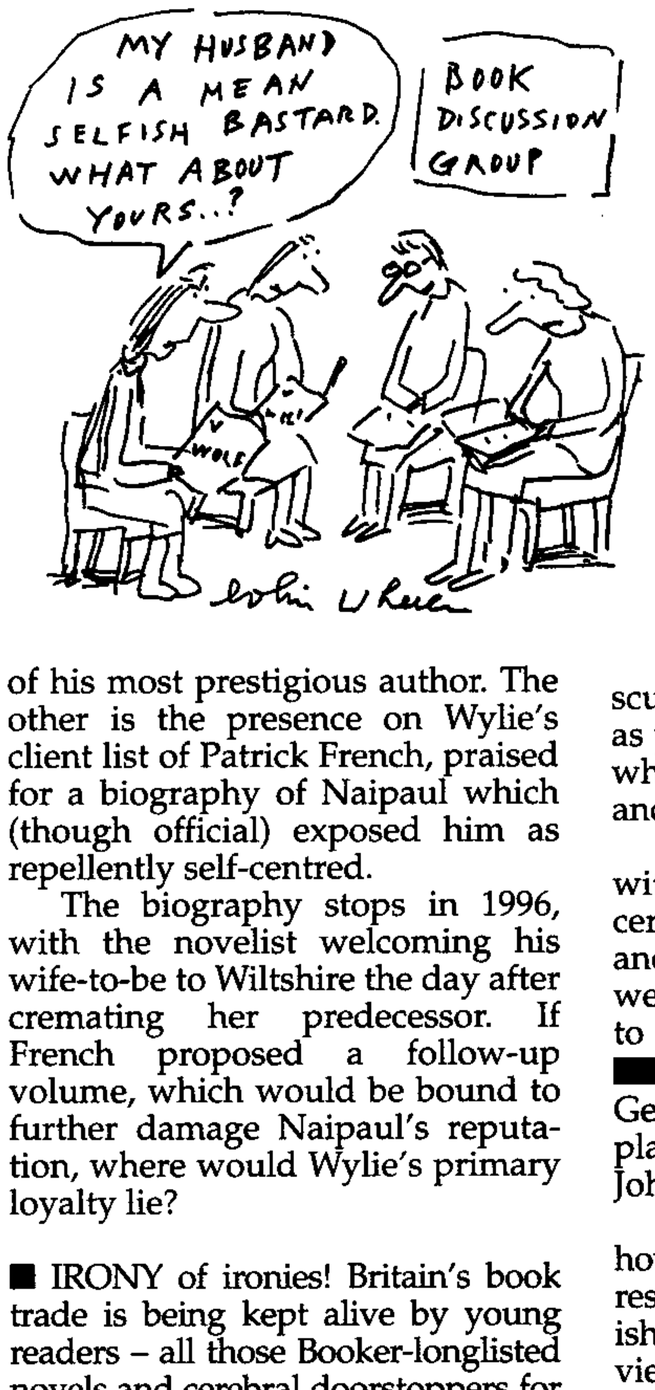
The book blurb concludes: "In the rapidly changing publishing climate of today this is also a nostalgic reminder of a time when creativity could flourish unburdened by the shackles of corporate bureaucracy." This partly refers to DK's lunatic decision to print 18m books to tie in with the return of the *Star Wars* movies, which nearly crippled the company before Penguin snapped it up in 2000.

But, with uncanny timing and as if to illustrate the point further, the book came out just before Penguin announced that its 80 Strand HQ was to become 100 people lighter, with almost 10 percent of its British staff to be made redundant. Jobs will go at Penguin and Rough Guides, while DK staff will be hit particularly hard by the cuts, which John Makinson, Penguin Group chairman and chief executive, says are due to "unprecedented pressure on our costs and our traditional ways of working". For that, read cheaper labour has been found elsewhere, with most of DK's operations to be outsourced to India and the creation of up to 140 jobs in Penguin's New Delhi office.

Davis may like to add another chapter to his book: while a dejected DK falls in London, it rises in India.

■ JULY has become agent Andrew Wylie's hunting season. Last summer the Jackal snapped up the estates of Vladimir Nabokov and Roberto Bolano; this July (just as he was showing his ability to make money for dead authors' descendants by flogging a Nabokov draft of *Laura* to *Playboy*) he has lured the young American short story writer Wells Tower and the Nobel laureate VS Naipaul away from their agents.

Acquiring the curmudgeonly Naipaul has two piquant aspects. One is that the agent who lost out is the gentlemanly Gillon Aitken, a colleague of the Jackal at Aitken, Stone and Wylie in the 80s and 90s and credited with acting as the mentor then of the future poacher



of his most prestigious author. The other is the presence on Wylie's client list of Patrick French, praised for a biography of Naipaul which (though official) exposed him as repellently self-centred.

The biography stops in 1996, with the novelist welcoming his wife-to-be to Wiltshire the day after cremating her predecessor. If French proposed a follow-up volume, which would be bound to further damage Naipaul's reputation, where would Wylie's primary loyalty lie?

■ IRONY of ironies! Britain's book trade is being kept alive by young readers – all those Booker-longlisted novels and cerebral doorstoppers for grown-ups at the front of bookshops are just a façade, with the real, life-preserving business conducted in the dingy kids' and teenage sections at the back.

For a decade, the biennial Harry Potter bonanza made book retailing viable, with Richard and Judy-backed novels also contributing for part of that period. Now Hogwarts is history, as is the chat-show book club; but a replacement for JK Rowling has appeared with the improbable timing of a *deus ex machina*.

Novels in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* vampire saga for young adults stand at Nos 2, 4, 8 and 10 in Amazon's top 10, with special "red-edged" editions likely to rake in more online and in shops and *The Twilight Journals* due in the autumn. Figures published in the latest *Bookseller* show the book trade took £10m in Meyer sales in the first half of 2009, a staggering total that reflects the benefits from the *Twilight* movie.

It's not unamusing that, like a vampire itself, bookselling is so reliant on sucking sustenance from teenage girls.

■ JANE BUSSMANN's *The Worst Date Ever*, the tale of how she went from interviewing celebrities in LA to pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army around Uganda, is as full of scurrilous asides about the famous as you might expect from someone who has written for both *South Park* and the *Brass Eye Paedophile Special*.

Publisher Macmillan has dealt with this House of Commons-style: certain words are simply redacted and replaced with black space, so we learn that "Kevin Spacey came to injure his head tripping over a [redacted] at 4 am in a public park"; Bob Geldof is "a [redacted]"; and that "aeroplanes and [redacted]" are "what makes John Travolta tick".

One fact that has been spared, however, is the identity of the editor responsible for the article that finished Bussmann's Hollywood interviewing career in 2003. An interview with the actor Ashton Kutcher was rewritten after Bussmann submitted it to the *Evening Standard*, with completely fictitious quotes inserted, claiming he had said of his partner Demi Moore: "She was the hottest actress in Hollywood when I was growing up... Now it's great, I'm fucking her."

Who was the commissioning editor responsible for the piece, which resulted in a grovelling apology after Kutcher called in his lawyers? None other than Eye favourite Liz Jones, who, in an email Bussmann reproduces, called the fabricated quotes a "couple of small snippets" which were "not ideal". She has, of course, since moved to the Daily Mail.

'Bookworm'

Pseuds Corner

The grass court exemplifies not just a horticultural phenomenon but a cultural one: within its striped symmetry is a display of power as emphatic as a column of North Korean tanks.

MARK EASTON,
BBC News

It was the most anticipated first sight of a ceiling since Michaelangelo pulled back the covers on the Sistine Chapel.

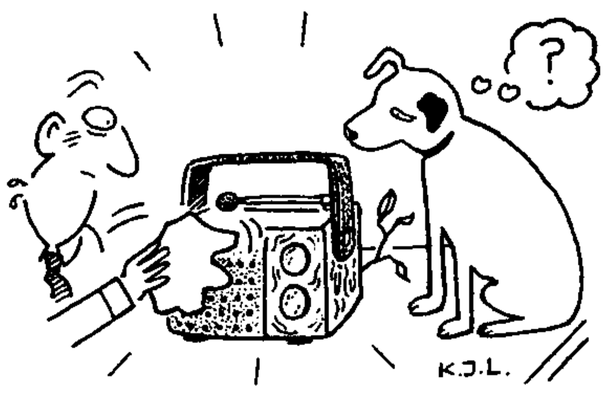
Wimbledon official website

[Susan] Boyle sent her two show tunes soaring to the heavens with a voice so pained and pure that men wept and the kids froze, awed and a little scared, as if staring at a fusion of Madonna, Princess Di, the Mona Lisa, Jade Goody and Maria Callas.

CHRIS ROBERTS reviews 'Britain's Got Talent' Wembley Arena Show, *London Lite*

I think Ilona's Asshole is a wonderful work. It's really about the acceptance of the self and the confidence to display one's genitalia or display one's asshole.

JEFF KOONS,
Guardian



The uncoated surface should be oiled periodically to encourage a deeper connection between user and object.

Website description of the wooden radio sold in the Design Museum shop

We started something akin to the Suffragettes. We'll always be known as that.

Ex Spice Girl MEL B, *Metro*

Koons, in some way, is trying to show us something beyond the literal. It is not just a scrupulous copy that he fabricates. He improves on reality. He makes it ideal. That Flipper the dolphin is not just an extremely accurate replica of a pool toy; it is a pool toy finning its way towards the Platonic world of perfect forms.

RACHEL CAMPBELL-JOHNSTON,
The Times

It's like an imaginative leap of faith from the daily drudge of going to the supermarket to the idea of the domestic still-life painting, but also with the supposed purity of Modernist monochrome abstract painting.

Tate Britain curator ANDREW WILSON on the gallery's purchase of a £70.32 Morrison's grocery receipt (and the groceries listed on it) at an estimated price of £30,000

CONTRIBUTORS: Gavin McEwan, P. Whiting, Jon West, Alan Diment, Christopher Joubert, Ian Merrill, Paul Askew, George Anderson.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

FEEDING THE POOR

A GR8 idea

SO MUCH for the promise at the G8 summit in L'Aquila to invest $20bn in food production to feed Africa's poor. With no detail on when the cash is due, how it will be spent or by whom, it remains in the "believe it when you see it" category of international commitments.

What is known for sure is that the British government's £1bn share is simply coming out of budgets announced in 2007.

Back in the real world, Britain's principal development investment arm CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, has of course all but deserted agriculture. Since 1998 the proportion of its £1bn portfolio invested in this sector has fallen from 25 percent to 5 percent, as investments across sub-Saharan Africa were sold off, deemed not "profitable" enough at a time when New Labour was looking to privatise the fund.

In reality that means at least £200m has been withdrawn from a sector now judged critical to sustainable poverty relief, though even this underestimates the damage.

CDC was created in 1948 and in its first 50 years of existence it became expert at developing viable agricultural businesses in Africa and actively transferring this expertise to local managers. But with the retreat from rural business in favour of urban investments in things like shopping malls or power generation which in any case attract private capital (a move defended by the Department for International Development in 2002 as "a rational response to negative investment prospects"), that expertise has been lost.

All rural presence in Malawi and Uganda, for example, has disappeared and thousands of local staff have been laid off. What could have provided a useful means to invest the new funds has been dismantled in favour of seeking 25 percent-plus returns by placing the cash with private equity firms – including its own privatised fund management arm Actis – from a swanky riverside office in London.

● **DESERVING RICH: CDC might have abandoned African farmers but there is one deserving group in which it invests increasing amounts of development cash: consultants.**

As the rest of the public sector begins to show some restraint in hiring consultants following exposes by the *Eye* and others (a fall of 31 percent across Whitehall from 2006 to 2008), CDC bucked the trend in style. In 2006 it spent £266,000 on consultants but last year, when it recorded a thumping loss, it managed to splurge £1.892m – an increase of more than 600 percent.

Big earners were McKinsey, with £327,000 for advice on lending to business in developing countries, a crucial activity abandoned several years ago as not profitable enough. Then there was £585,000 for PR advice, a seven-fold increase from £83,000 two years earlier. £70,000 went to Quiller for the PR offensive launched to respond to the *Eye's* reports on CDC ahead of a tough parliamentary grilling. Also earning very nicely were financial PR firm Merlin (£240,000, twice the amount of the previous year with extra work plugging CDC's new investment policy) and Bell Pottinger (£99,000, up from £28,000 two years earlier for "public affairs").

BUILDING SCHOOLS

Playground bullies

HONEST debate is taboo in Labour's brave new educational world. That's how it seems, anyway, to teachers, academics and others who have dared criticise aspects of the government's £50bn Building Schools for the Future programme.

Policy Exchange, a right-leaning think-tank, interviewed 56 senior BSF project managers, private contractors, senior teachers, architects, educational advisors and other so-called "stakeholders" while preparing a report into the troubled programme. When a draft was leaked to Partnerships for Schools (PfS), the quango tasked with delivering the scheme, it resorted to dirty tricks to silence the criticism. Interviewees were leaned on to tone down or withdraw their remarks, with the implicit threat that their businesses or careers would suffer if they did not.

BSF was launched five years ago, with a promise to renew every secondary school in England. In true Blairite fashion, however, rebuilding crumbling schools was not enough. BSF requires local authorities to define a grand aim of "educational transformation" while "encouraging" them to include academies in their plans.

All Policy Exchange's interviewees, according to the report, struggled to define what "educational transformation" meant. Many wanted such jargon ditched. The report quotes one senior figure from a private sector company, who said that his firm, after years of BSF contracts, still did not have an "organisational understanding" of what the phrase meant, describing it as "this mysterious transformation thing".

The report recommends that the BSF programme is simplified and becomes a straightforward building programme – a good enough aim, surely? Because of the obsession with "educational transformation" and with foisting large and unwieldy authority-wide IT contracts on schools, the think-tank says that without reform the programme is bound to fail.

During interviews with local authorities and other senior figures in BSF, it emerged that many felt "bullied" by the quango – and thought it was intent on boosting its power and control over school building generally. The think tank sent a small number of senior BSF figures a draft copy of the report – ironically, to make sure it was fair to PfS.

A copy found its way to the quango, which immediately proved the bullying allegation by ringing round as many interviewees as it could identify (and a number it simply guessed might have been critical off the record) attempting to make them retract their quotes. Over a period of two weeks a stream of panicked interviewees rang Policy Exchange following warning calls or emails from PfS, frightened that their companies might lose lucrative BSF contracts because they had dared to criticize the programme.

One was told he had been "caught with his trousers down" and should expect life to be difficult unless his comments were watered down. Another company hired a PR firm in its desperation to strike certain phrases the quango didn't like from the record. A third received emails from competitors who had been briefed that he had spoken out of turn.

Such was the intimidation that one interviewee demanded that his comments be deleted entirely, while the rest all had their names removed from the published report. So that's what they mean by "transformation"!

TAX HAVENS

Jammy for dodgers

AMONG Gordon Brown's proudest G20 achievements in April was the worldwide clampdown on tax havens.

The £200bn these pariah territories cost the world annually, and Britain's £20bn or so losses, would be tackled by "tax information exchange agreements" under which havens would hand over tax dodgers' details in the way that already happens between the UK and Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. So how effective are such agreements?

Using freedom of information laws, the *Eye* has discovered that such deals are as useful as the proverbial chocolate teapot. In the last three years the three tax havens have between them handed over information on a taxpayer voluntarily on a total of 17 occasions – twice a year each on average. Given the hundreds of thousands of people and companies using the havens, this is not a great haul.

HM Revenue & Customs requested information on taxpayers it is investigating 141 times, or 16 times a year from each haven – with how much success is not known. But even if these efforts yielded anything, the effect would be infinitesimal, which is no surprise as tax havens don't want and aren't equipped to spill the beans.

To get off a blacklist drawn up after the G20, tax havens have to sign a dozen information agreements, and all are busy doing so. Brown and the organisation coordinating the effort, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), insist this is a sign of the G20's success. In fact the havens can't believe their luck. Sign a few bits of paper that won't bother their tax-avoiding customers too much anyway, and they're in the clear.

Those who use tax havens haven't been slow to exploit the respectability the G20 initiative gives them. And quickest off the mark is… the British government. In its white paper published this month, "Building our Common Future", the Department for International Development promises that publicly-owned international development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, "will in future only commit capital to new funds and direct investments in jurisdictions substantially implementing the [G20] international tax standard". Carte blanche, in other words, to channel taxpayers' money through Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Mauritius and CDC's other favourite tax havens to which Gordon Brown and chums have given their approval.

● **JERSEY CASH COW: Another valued customer of the offshore industry is Michael O'Higgins, chairman of the Audit Commission (motto "protecting the public purse").**

As the last *Eye* revealed, he ripped the taxpayer off for a fortune by channeling three years worth of hefty bonuses from his previous job at the top of management consultancy PA Consulting (almost certainly over a million pounds) through an elaborate Jersey trust set-up.

O'Higgins also sits on the board of the very body he has stung for several hundred big ones: HM Treasury. The minister in charge of tax there, financial secretary Stephen Timms, is none too keen on this sort of behaviour, declaring recently that "the vast majority of people in Britain pay the right amount of tax, and they have every right to be angered by reports of a small minority of people… deliberately seeking to evade or avoid tax". The famously moral Mr Timms promised to remain "relentless in taking action… to tackle both tax evasion and avoidance."

So he will be kicking O'Higgins off the Treasury board? Er, no. Timms' official spokesman tells the *Eye* that O'Higgins remains safe and "can effectively support and challenge the work of HM Treasury's board of directors".

MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

A bleeding scandal

FEW miscarriages of justice appear to be as blatant as the case of Gary Critchley, who was 17 when he was convicted of a fatal hammer attack on a man called Edward McNeill in a London squat.

Critchley is now 46 and, 28 years down the line, still resident in the hospital wing at HMP Gartree. How a jury ever found him guilty, how the appeal court upheld his conviction and how the criminal cases review commission (CCRC) can now refuse to send his case back for further consideration is extraordinary.

His solicitor, Glyn Maddocks is so outraged and exasperated at the criminal justice system's refusal to correct what he says is "obviously a terrible mistake" he is appealing for anyone – witnesses, police, prosecutors, forensic scientists – to come forward. DNA samples would probably answer many of the questions; but police and prosecutors have told the CCRC they cannot trace the many items of forensic evidence from the case that should have been retained.

In the early hours of Saturday 28 June 1980, Critchley, a young punk rocker who had only been in London for two weeks, was found lying seriously injured on a pavement below his squat. He had a broken back, ankle and wrist, and was subsequently found to have suffered brain damage from a hammer blow to the front of his skull. He was able to tell the man who found him that he thought he had been there for some time but could give no account of how he had come by his injuries, and he had no idea whether he fell, was pushed or had jumped from above. Drug traces in his blood showed he had taken large quantities of sleeping pills as well as alcohol.

When the hospital called police to investigate, they found Mr McNeill dead in the squat above and the room covered in blood – most of it that of McNeill, who had been hit with a hammer 27 times, but some of it Critchley's.

Two squatters from the same block initially told police that about two to three hours after they had seen Critchley and McNeill enter the flat, a yellow car had arrived carrying three men, and that one had kept watch while two went up to the flat. But in later statements the squatters changed their accounts about how long the men stayed and even about whether their arrival was on the same night. Police maintained they were unable to trace the men and inferred that they did not exist.

Inside the flat a bloodstained hammer was found, but with no prints to link it to Critchley. Critchley's blood was also found on a car "crook lock", suggesting he may also have been struck by that. Bloodstained clothing near the body included jeans which had traces of both men's blood and a T-shirt with Critchley's blood only.

Despite the fact that McNeill's blood had been spattered all over the room, not one speck of his blood was found on Critchley's clothing. A prosecution pathologist speculated that this may have been because Critchley had been lying injured in the rain for a considerable time – failing to explain how the rain must have washed off McNeill's blood but not Critchley's own. The defence pathologist said this was nonsense and "the attacker or attackers would have had to have been not just specked but drenched in the victim's blood".

The only forensic evidence linking Critchley to the attack was an undone training shoe – two to three sizes too small for him – which Critchley was found to be wearing on his left foot. On his other was one of the laced-up boots which witnesses said he had been wearing that day. Footprints "exactly similar" to the print on the sole of the trainer were found in the flat, which the prosecution argued showed Critchley was in the room after McNeill was attacked and probably killed.

But if Critchley was wearing one boot and one trainer as alleged, why was there no blood on the sole of the boot and no boot print in the flat? What happened to his other boot? It was not found in the flat. The prosecution's argument was that punks wore clothes like that – even if it was far too small for his foot. As for the hammer blow to Critchley's own head, the prosecution claimed he must have struck himself as he launched his frenzied attack on McNeill. For that to be correct, however, Critchley's injury, which caused him serious frontal lobe brain damage, would have been caused by the claw end of the hammer – but his injury was the same as McNeill's, consistent with the round end of the hammer.

Prosecutors had relied on the fact that Critchley had told police he did not remember going home with McNeill, but then in a letter to friends written during his three months in hospital, he said he had taken him home and got drunk, and remembered opening the door and being struck. They said Critchley's claims of amnesia were bogus.

Despite the anomalies, the jury convicted Critchley. A year later, the court of appeal disposed of the case equally swiftly. But this was before a series of high-profile miscarriage cases shook the justice system, revealing how a mixture of cock-up, conspiracy, dodgy police and "expert" evidence can leave people rotting in jail for crimes they did not commit.

So how has the CCRC now come to reject Critchley's case? It rejected his argument that new expert evidence should be brought to show the

prosecution pathologist's assertion that rain washed off McNeill's blood from his clothes was scientifically incorrect. The commission stated that even if that were true, it was possible that having murdered McNeill he changed his clothes before leaving the flat!

However, that contradicts the commission's earlier statement that he was wearing the same clothes he had all day, which would mean this drunk and drugged-up teenager, himself with a serious head wound, would have had to change clothes before carrying out a murder and then change back again – and in any event the other T-shirt found had only Critchley's blood on it. It is, according to Maddocks, "utter nonsense".

It also rejected his arguments surrounding the training shoe, saying it was known at trial that the shoe did not fit Critchley and that he had not been wearing it earlier in the day, so this was not new evidence to form the basis of an appeal. The commission had tried and failed to locate any exhibits in the case.

As for the hammer injury to Critchley's head, his defence team at trial had not called evidence to show that it was caused by the round end of the hammer, thus undermining the prosecution claim that he hit himself in the frenzy. So this was new evidence. But the commission rejected this, saying there was "no reasonable explanation" for the defence not arguing it at the time.

The commission also rejected a series of submissions relating to the changed evidence of one of his fellow squatters. Lawyers for Critchley had argued that criminal charges against one of them had been dropped on the direction of a senior police officer, on the very day he changed his statement to say he may have made a mistake over the day on which he saw men enter the flat and that in any event they had come straight down. At trial the squatter reverted to his original claim.

Solicitor Glyn Maddocks' appeal to try to get the matter reopened is unprecedented. He has no doubt that whoever was in the flat that night attacked both McNeill and Critchley and then made a bodged attempt at framing the unconscious Critchley by swapping shoes with him.

"The commission has totally ignored the utter absurdity of the prosecution case, that Critchley, having committed this horrible crime, risked killing himself by leaping from a high window to escape, rather than just running down the stairwell," Maddocks says. "This case is a scandalous stain on our justice system. Others in prison at the time had big political campaigns to force the courts to re-examine the evidence against them. Critchley had no one – and he is still rotting in jail."

It's a long haul for Mr Hyde

GEOFF HYDE, the 60-year-old haulier whose dubious conviction for cocaine supply was highlighted two years ago in *Eye* 1198, has won a major battle in trying to overturn his conviction.

Last week a judge dismissed prolonged attempts to seize Mr Hyde's assets, which the prosecution had claimed were the proceeds of crime. But as the *Eye* pointed out just after his trial, forensic accountants for the prosecution had accounted for every single penny of his 30-year-old small haulage business. They had valued his modest Surrey home, small apartment in Spain and trucks, savings in ISAs and pensions at a total of £933,453. Hardly the trappings of the international drug baron the prosecution claimed him to be. They were simply the rewards of a lifetime's hard work.

Finally Judge Simon Davies ruled that as the Crown Prosecution Service had repeatedly failed to produce any documents to support its claims the confiscation action should be thrown out.

Mr Hyde (pictured left, with his grandchild) was convicted on the basis of a single telephone call he took from a man claiming to be a friend of a fellow

haulier, Mick Barnes, asking if he could use Hyde's London yard for emergency brake repairs to a lorry that was coming in from abroad and heading north. Mr Hyde went to the yard, moved a truck to make room, alerted another driver to the fact that the lorry was heading in and went home to nurse his cold. The lorry turned out to have 77 kilos of cocaine on board.

Mr Hyde's house, office and car were all thoroughly searched and not a scrap of evidence was found. There were no witnesses, no documentary, photographic or scientific evidence, no strange travel arrangements, indeed nothing to link him to the crime. There was, however, the one phone call, and because in his panic Mr Hyde had not told police about it, it appeared suspicious.

The end of the confiscation process means that, despite protracted efforts over the last three-and-a-half years, there is no evidence that Mr Hyde made any money illegally whatsoever. It also means that he and his lawyers can now concentrate on having his conviction quashed.

GOBBLEDEGOOK

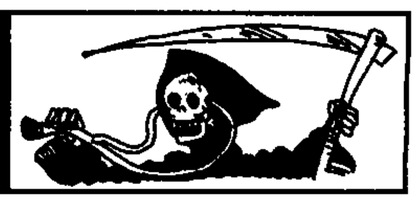
Stupid letter of the week

THERE'S nothing like a professional business letter to reassure your customers. But the missive received by *Eye* reader John Oliver from the Halifax last month was nothing like professional.

It started badly, citing "you're number" [*sic*] followed by, er, the wrong number. The letter began "I refer your letter regarding..." and the grammatical horrors continued, as customer relations manager Anne Wilson wrote that she had "arranged to have the charge reversed of and you account closed." Er, what?

Has any reader received a worse letter than this?

HEALTH CHECK



MEDICINE BALLS

Eye told you so...

HOW long before the UK becomes the genital wart capital of the world?

Back in March 2007, M.D. challenged Labour's decision to delay the human papilloma virus vaccine programme (*Eye* 1181), and then belatedly choose a vaccine that only protects against cervical cancer (Cervarix), rather than both cancer and genital warts (Gardasil), when many other countries had chosen the latter route (see *Eye* 1215).

Genital warts are very common (100,000 new cases a year in England alone) and although they don't kill you, they can kill your sex life, are fiddly and expensive to treat (£25m a year), often reoccur and condoms offer only partial protection. M.D. argued that choosing Gardasil, which has the same list price as Cervarix, would quickly save both anguish and money.

Data from Australia now supports this. Since April 2007, Gardasil has been offered to 12 to 18-year-old girls in a school-based programme, and has been made widely available to those not in school. By the end of 2008, researchers at the country's largest sexual health centre in Melbourne found a 48 percent decrease in genital warts in women aged under 28 years, and a 17 percent decrease in heterosexual men. This has resulted in substantial cost savings and freeing up of time to treat other sexually transmitted infections.

The findings were presented at a meeting of the International Society of STD Research in London earlier this month. Another presentation, from the University of New South Wales, had the snappy title "Unvaccinated backpackers will spread genital warts in Australia". It was also suggested that backpackers from countries like the UK should have to prove they've had Gardasil to gain entry.

Mass vaccination and patient choice don't sit easily together. Some parents, quite reasonably, may want to wait until more safety data is available before vaccinating their daughters, while some may want to choose Cervarix because they think it might offer longer term protection against cervical cancer than Gardasil.

Everyone needs up to date, unbiased information to reach a conclusion. But when M.D. was researching Gardasil for his daughter, neither the NHS "Choices" website nor the NHS vaccination website returned a single hit. Having made the choice for you, based largely on a secret bulk-buy discount with Cervarix manufacturer Glaxo SmithKline, the government wouldn't even admit the possibility of an alternative. Those running the vaccine programme at my daughter's school hadn't even heard of Gardasil; they weren't allowed to give it and neither was our GP. Plenty of private clinics were offering it, for £400 and three trips into Bristol.

When the NHS is shit, doctors phone their friends. I spoke to two sexual health consultants, both of whom advised that I would be "mad" not to protect my daughter against genital warts if I could, and one sent me a prescription for Gardasil. At a conference last year, Dr David Salisbury – head of the government's vaccination programme – dismissed M.D.'s campaign for girls to be at least offered the choice of Gardasil and referred to me as "the comedian and doctor". I'd rather be comedian and doctor than have all those genital warts on my conscience. Follow the link, Dave. It's not very funny.
www.chestersexualhealth.co.uk/genitalwarts.htm

M.D.

BEXLEY

Lie of the land

RED faces at Bexley Care NHS Trust in Kent, which appointed Lee Whitehead as "manager of service development and commissioning" shortly after he had completed a short prison sentence for... lying about his qualifications to secure other NHS jobs.

Whitehead's high-flying £78,000-a-year career as "director of planning and modernisation" at Stoke on Trent primary care trust came to an abrupt halt when he was found to have falsely claimed that he had a master's degree and a doctorate in psychology. He was jailed for 12 weeks (but was released after just three weeks) for obtaining a pecuniary advantage by deception and making a false instrument.

Stoke, apparently, was not the first employer he had fooled. But his past inventiveness was evidently no deterrent for health chiefs in Bexley, who as *Eye* readers will know, have already had more than enough trouble persuading patients that closure of most services at their local hospital will lead to better health care.

Bexley initially said Whitehead had acknowledged his "error of judgement" and that his appointment was "consistent with our recruitment procedures". But no sooner had the story appeared in the local paper, the *Bromley Times*, than Whitehead resigned with immediate effect.

IT

Global warning

A SERIES of previously secret official reviews of the £12.7bn NHS IT programme, now released under freedom of information laws, reveal that as long ago as 2002 the government knew of the problems the *Eye* and others have long highlighted.

These included contracts being drawn up before anybody knew what the health service needed, insufficient consultation, over-reliance on monopoly providers, unrealistic promises and so on. The reports from the Office of Government Commerce, known as "gateway reviews", are intended to act as an early warning system so that troubled projects can be corrected before it's too late. But those in charge of the NHS IT programme, over the years including ministers Lord Hunt and Lord Warner and health secretaries Alan Milburn, John Reid and Patricia Hewitt, not to mention former IT supremo Richard Granger, were able to plough on regardless because nobody could point to the assessments and ask why they weren't being heeded.

The Department of Health kept the reports secret for years on "public interest" grounds, releasing them only after similar reviews on ID cards were forced out of the Home Office by the Information Tribunal. More recent reports remain withheld for the same reason.

GP COMPETITION

Churn again

WHEN will the government stop wasting money on NHS management consultants (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*)?

The latest nonsense comes from favoured beancounters Ernst & Young, who have come up with the concept of "patient churn". This is Birtspeak for recommending that patients must be persuaded to chop and change between GPs, creating a "competitive tension" between them. A briefing document prepared for NHS Primary Care Contracting (another superfluous management arm) and sent to all primary care trusts, says that "a high level of patient churn is essential to ensuring healthy competition" – just like swapping your utility company.

The reason people switch energy providers, of course, is to save on their bills; and that kind of competitive market doesn't apply when patients don't pay for an NHS GP visit. Far from ensuring quality, doctors argue that the loss of continuity of care could in fact have the opposite effect, with the potential for disaster.

ISTCs

Waste line

ONE of the first of New Labour's disastrous independent sector treatment centre (ISTC) contracts, the £42m deal with Netcare to deliver cataract operations from mobile units, came to an end last month. As with so many other ISTC projects, the NHS was £8m out of pocket as the South African corporation had done only 80 percent of the contracted workload.

Over five years the contract delivered just 36,000 operations, a tiny proportion of the NHS's annual caseload of around 300,000 cataract operations. Evidently it complicated the NHS's own expansion of services to reduce waiting times, and the contract is not being renewed.

There is a strong case for other ISTC contracts to be scrapped before more money is wasted on non-existent treatment, because ISTC contracts guarantee a minimum payment regardless of how few are treated.

As the *Eye* reported in May, Edinburgh University academics Allyson Pollock and Graham Kirkwood have estimated that up to £927m could have been wasted on phantom operations in ISTCs up and down the country. One is the North East London Treatment Centre, next to King George's Hospital in Ilford, which has been running at just 75 percent of the "contract baseline" since it was opened in 2006. It took a lot of arm-twisting to reach even that level, because last year it was delivering only 54 percent of contracted operations.

NHS Barking & Dagenham has also highlighted the extremely low take-up rate of the diagnostics services run by InHealth and Netcare from 40 other sites across London, which have only been seeing 45 percent of the predicted number of patients.

NHS PLC

Buy-buy from him

LORD DARZI's departure as health minister in Gordon Brown's "government of all the talents" is a blow for the prime minister, but it's also a pain for the bankers, private health firms and consultancies who have spent so many hours talking to him.

No doubt they hoped his Next Stage Review of the NHS would lead to the creation of lots more privately funded and run clinics, all set up with loads of management consultancy help. But their gains have been modest so far.

Following freedom of information requests, it emerged that in 2008 and 2009 so far, Darzi had meetings with bankers NM Rothschild & Sons, Apax Capital, UBS Investment Bank and Cinven; with private medical companies Humana Care UK, Humana Europe, United Medical Enterprises, GE Healthcare and the MCCI Medical Group; and with computing and management consultants from IMS Health, IBM, Capita, Dr Foster Intelligence and Serco Solutions.

The minister also had a couple of meetings with Boots the Chemist (which employs former health minister Patricia Hewitt). But now all these executives and lobbyists are going to have to go through the whole process again with another minister (who will probably only be in the job until the election in the first half of next year).

In the City

STATISTICS are wonderfully flexible friends, as Disraeli indicated, and very useful if you're looking to show how you are turning a "basket case" into a transformed, victim-focused, crime-busting agency. Which is exactly what director Richard Alderman and his army of PR and consultant helpers are doing at the Serious Farce Office.

Last week's annual report, the first since "Grey Man" took over in April last year, was just such an exercise in selective stats. "During the year, 18 cases went to trial, in 17 of these at least one defendant was convicted. This translates to a success rate of 94 percent." Well, up to a very tiny point, Lady Scotland – the attorney-general and Alderman's boss. The annual report goes on to give some rather different figures but without calculating any percentages – for very good reasons – other than the unsurprising claim that "defendants who pleaded guilty… were convicted". Really!

Sixty defendants were charged in those 18 cases, with nine convicted at trial and 27 pleading guilty. That translates to a success rate of not 94 percent but 60 percent – down from the previous year's 68 percent but in line with the five-year average.

However, 24 of those 60 defendants were acquitted. Compared with nine convictions at trial, that translates to a success rate against those who did not cop a plea of not 94 percent, not 60 percent but a meagre 27 percent!

It should be said that the 24 acquittals included the five companies and nine individuals from the NHS generic drugs price-fixing prosecution, Operation Holbein, thrown out by the courts. Insiders say there was discussion of ways to omit this fiasco from the numbers. However, even removing those defendants, there were still 10 acquittals compared with nine trial convictions.

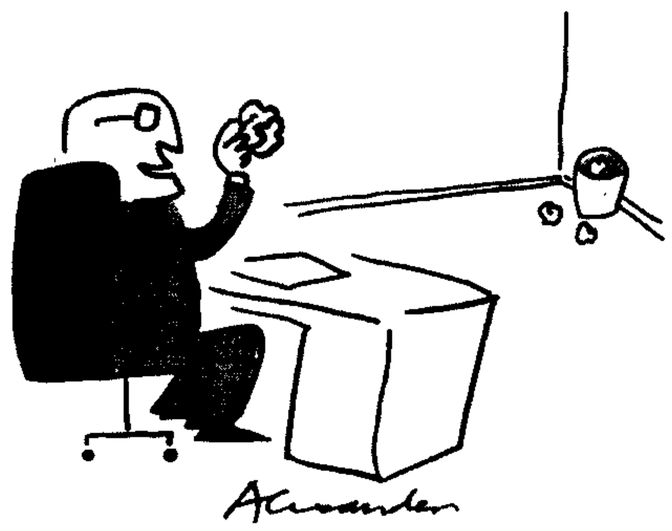
No wonder defence lawyers reiterate that plea-bargaining is unlikely to work in the UK with major fraud cases. Why should they advise any client, however guilty, to rush to put their hands up when there is such a good chance that even if they are charged they will get off either because of legal loopholes or poor prosecution?

So year one of the Alderman age has produced none of the promised revolution demanded by last year's highly critical De Grazia report and by the Attorney General. But then that would be difficult, as every one of the 18 cases began under the previous regimes of Robert Wardle or Ros Wright. Nobody ever accused the SFO of speedy justice! That includes all the cases under which charges have been brought since Alderman took over – such high-profile prosecutions as the South Yorkshire trading standards office, Welsh Slate and MFC Finance, as well as the convictions obtained in the current SFO year, such as the first guilty plea in the long-running Iraq oil-for-food corruption investigation.

Not a single major new case has so far been brought by the SFO, 15 months after Alderman took over. Silence continues to reign over the remnants of the BAE bribes investigation in South Africa, Tanzania, Romania and the Czech Republic. Mabey & Johnson, whose guilty plea came conveniently days before the annual report was released, is among the smallest of the Iraq targets – no word yet on the multinationals GlaxoSmithKline, AstraZeneca and Eli Lilly or Weir Group.

Not that the SFO has not been busy. It is investigating the London operations of "Ponzi" king Bernie Madoff, is looking at those of AIG Financial Products and has frozen $100m belonging to fellow "Ponzi" operator Sir Allen Stanford – at the request of American prosecutors. Whether there will be any charges in the Madoff or AIG cases remains to be seen; most of the likely defendants are in the US.

But this is part of Alderman's proactive approach designed to show that the SFO is on the case. This enables him to state that he has not



"If this goes in, I'll award myself a six figure bonus"

ignored headline frauds on his doorstep. But what happens if those press releases do not translate into prosecutions or convictions?

There is no sign yet of any "perp walks" for those hate figures cast out from the banking pantheon, or indeed of anything relating to those responsible for the crisis. Investigations have started into an alleged fraud on Anglo Irish Bank and the collapsed Weavering Capital hedge fund. But there has been a lot of PR conducted by his personal mouthpiece, former BBC reporter Sam Jaffa, who sits on the SFO management board. Newspapers such as the *Financial Times* have been assiduously courted with leaks and interview opportunities. The clear aim is to lift the Alderman profile.

There is also the courting of the City and the encouragement of whistleblowers to drop a dime and of the guilty to rush to confess their sins – all of which is viewed with some scepticism by insiders and legal experts.

Then there is MG-Rover, which has the capacity to dog Alderman in the same way that BAE and the Saudis did Wardle. An internal report from PR consultant Mike Granatt is said to have told the SFO that it was perceived to have cravenly caved in to political pressure from the then Attorney General Lord Goldsmith and the departed Dear Leader Tony Blair in dropping the Saudi prosecution.

The £16m MG-Rover report – it cost three times what the taxpayer invested to save the failed carmaker – is now being studied by the SFO after two government inspectors had spent four years doing exactly the same. Those with knowledge of the procedures for such inspections raise questions about whether or when the SFO could bring charges. They point out that the inspectors could and maybe should have submitted an interim report months, if not years, ago if they had found evidence of criminal offences. In the case of the Guinness scandal, the inspectors submitted a report two years after their appointment in 1986. By then the police were already on the case.

Another puzzle is what happened to the report required from the MG-Rover liquidators into the actions of the directors. This is normally required to be sent to the insolvency section of the Department for Business within six months of their appointment – March 2006 for MG-Rover. The purpose of such a report is to decide whether the directors should be targeted for disqualification proceedings. But where inspectors have already been appointed under the Companies Act, this process is suspended. As a result, such proceedings may now be out of time and so would need to be bolted on to any criminal case on the basis of an assumed conviction. So any evidence compiled by the liquidators joins that from the inspectors on the SFO's "to do" file.

The Guinness case is relevant to MG-Rover for another reason. Guinness chief executive Ernest Saunders and his co-defendants were in part convicted on the basis of the evidence they had been compelled to give to the inspectors. The European Court of Human Rights subsequently ruled that this was unfair as it undermined their right to silence. So anything that the Phoenix Four have been compelled to admit to the MG-Rover inspectors can probably not be used against them to launch a future prosecution. That would mean the SFO having to start a whole new investigation and interviewing of witnesses, which could take months or years. And already there could be the risk of an abuse of process challenge to any charges on grounds of the passage of time.

All of which raises serious questions about the extent of any criminal offences uncovered by the MG-Rover inspectors and the ease or speed with which such offences could be prosecuted by the SFO starting from scratch this month.

For Alderman, though, there is a political problem. The government, and particularly Gordon Brown, will not be looking forward to the publication of the MG-Rover report, which is the inevitable consequence of a decision by the SFO to take no further action. Labour's handling of MG-Rover, both in welcoming the Phoenix Four "rescue" in 2000 and the government's attempted bail-out ahead of the 2005 election, is open to severe criticism for a huge wasting of taxpayers' money. So a decision by the SFO to start its own investigation – meaning no publication of the report – would be good news in Downing Street, especially if this resulted in no decision about a prosecution before the next election.

However, delaying any decision until after the next election and then doing nothing would open the SFO to accusations of once again bowing to political pressure. Alderman has promised to decide "quickly".

After years of working in the corridors of Whitehall power, Alderman is said to be much more politically savvy than Wardle. He is expected to know exactly what those who appointed him – he was not the first choice – will want and what they will not want. MG-Rover will test whether the SFO director really is as independent as the statute creating the SFO dictates.

"I want results, I want success, I want winners," Alderman tells his troops. Whether MG-Rover qualifies, we shall see. But at least the SFO has had one big success – it was written into an episode of the *Archers* back in March. Matt

☛ *See over...*

THE DIRECTORS
DREDGE & RIGG
THIS WORKSHOP WILL GIVE US A TOOLBOX FOR THE NEW 'BOLT ON' PROJECT...
...DRONE...
DRONE...
SIGH!
YAWN!
WHEN DID ALL THIS NONSENSE 'JARGON-SPEAK' COME IN ?
WHEN ACTUAL WORKSHOPS, TOOL BOXES AND BOLTS BECAME OBSOLETE!

I-SPY *City of London*

Submitted by Anon, London N4. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

Crawford was woken by a knock at his door from the man from Elm Street. Sadly, the investigator concerned has since taken early retirement.

Still, Alderman assures the *Guardian*: "By the end of August we are going to make some announcements that will make people sit up and say, 'Wow – this is what the SFO can do.'" Tum Tee Tum Tee Tum Tee Tum.

THOSE who do business in the former Soviet Union do so at their peril – it is still very much the Wild East, as journalists and human rights campaigners know to their cost. As do some businessmen.

Ian Baron, the 53-year-old chief executive of AIM-listed Cadogan Petroleum, was flown back to Britain last week after receiving what is described as a severe beating from several unidentified men in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev. The police are investigating what Cadogan's local office clearly saw as more than a simple mugging. It issued a strange statement saying it believed it knew who and what was behind the attack, which was related to its activities in Ukraine, where it holds several oil and gas licences.

Baron was hospitalised in Kiev for some days but it is unclear whether he is in a hospital here. A company spokesman in London could only say he was "continuing to work". "He was attacked. Obviously it is a concern," the spokesman remarked.

Baron returned to Cadogan in March. In May, Cadogan said that he had identified "irregular payments" totaling up to $7m and costs of almost $10m wrongly stated in the accounts for the previous three years. Last month the company took action to freeze the assets of several companies and individuals.

Cadogan raised £150m from its flotation last year at 230p; the company is currently valued at just £30m at 13p. Among its larger shareholders are the taxpayer-funded Lloyds Banking Group, via Scottish Widows and HBOS, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Within weeks of the float, the shares had to be suspended after it was reported that there was a legal challenge to some of its licences, which had been transferred from a state-owned company. Cadogan is in partnership with another state-owned entity. The legal dispute rumbles on. Cadogan may be winning, which could be related to the attack.

Challenges to licences awarded to western companies are all too common in eastern Europe. Corrupt judges take away the licences, which may only be returned after bribes are paid to politicians, to powerful officials or to the state, which may suddenly decide that the licences were sold too cheaply. So far, so eastern European business as usual. But the Baron assault shows that some locals may play even rougher.

Strangely, although the assault has been reported in Kiev, Cadogan has so far made no announcement to shareholders or the stock market that its chief executive may be in a hospital bed in Britain rather than behind a desk in Ukraine.

'Slicker'

VIDEO AND AUDIO NEWS

Woman delivers own baby in bathroom

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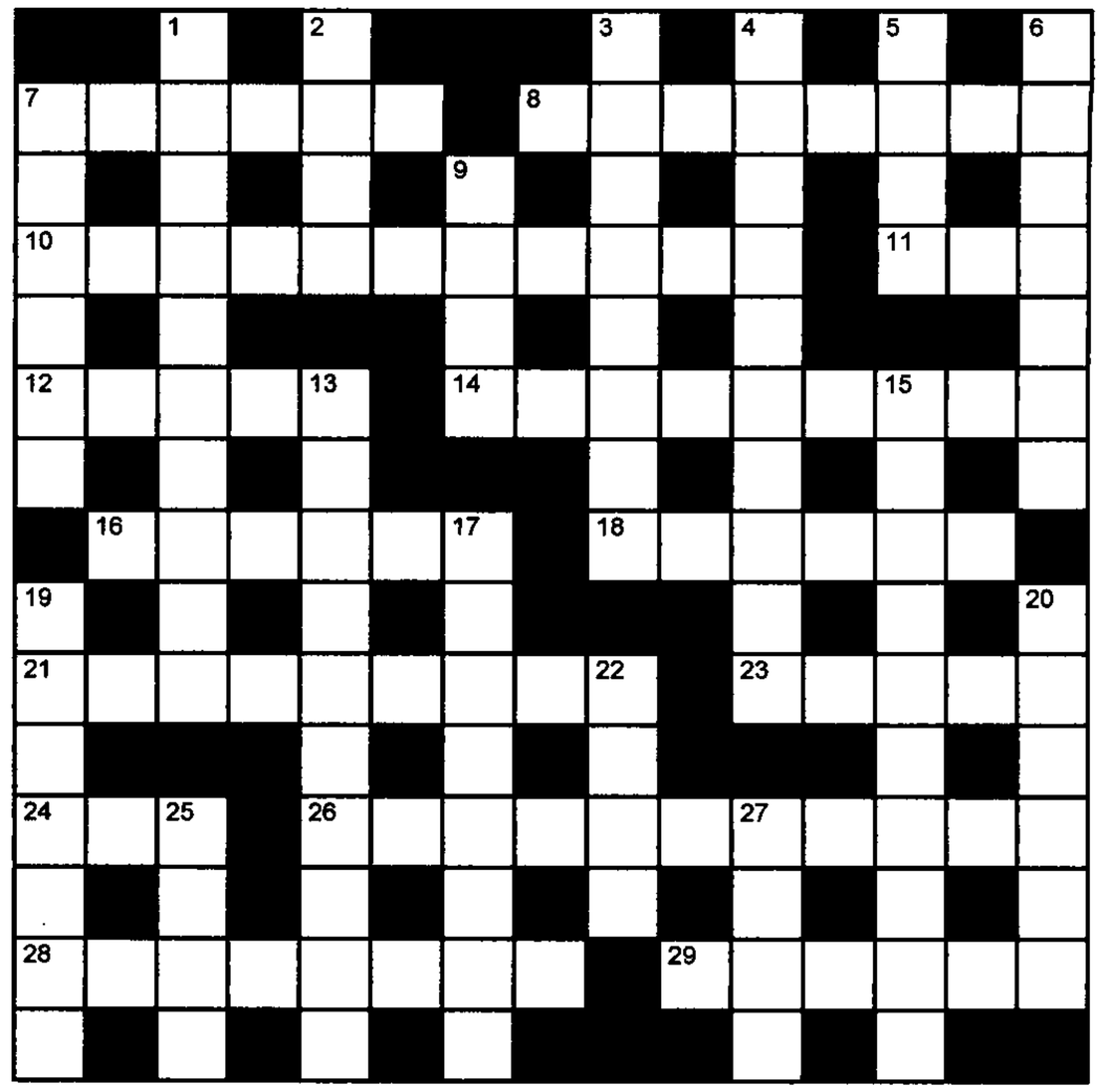

ACROSS

7 Prescott's no.1 fabric hot bottom support (6)
8 Prospect of censure against the President right – not black (8)
10 Not the no.1 fictional detective (left out, subject to claims by flipping MPs?) (6,5)
11 Wind up bullock's rear – Cyclops departs (3)
12/24 Gordon, famous familiar political loser, needs ultimate in commiserative drink (5,3)
14 Resemble Nick in need of following (4,5)
16 Excel in ingenuity: announce Oscar Wilde, say, to be gay (6)
18 Get rich like an expenses-claiming MP profligate (elected)? (4,2)
21 Some organ on batsman – a real surprise (3-6)
23 Squat, shit, dry end (5)
24 See 12ac.
26 On which Gordon's grip is weakening – makes him perspire! (11)
28 Many demanding intelligence about Cyclops in the City (8)
29 *Sun*: "Camilla's top, nice wobbles – good to see" (6)

DOWN

1 A leak requires record 50 euros spent (10)
2 Half of a comedy act, Socialists' leader, Brown (4)
3 Legislator Walker pissed about last two letters from Obama (8)
4 Makes you spit, heroin (and hack) – surprised? (10)
5/9 Straw's success: sod all! (4,4)
6 Hotel wife standing by ex-vice-President Ford buggered (7)
7 " ... soft buttocks on heartless beauty ..." – don't stop! (4,2)
9 See 5dn.
13 Cameron's right wing spews out (without copier) *Mail* and *Express*? (10)
15 Gloating PM tangled with U Thant about King & I (10)
17 VAT – Balls! – possibly increased, getting you pissed (6,2)
19 Marine's kinky stays (7)
20 Magoo-like, rattled PM coy about start of insubordination (6)
22 Bear Brown's head away – the wreck! (4)
25 Character problem, Madonna, at heart (4)
27 Pisspoor Scary Spice's introduction dropped quick (4)

Crossword 395 winner: FRED RILEY

ACROSS: 8 Hoodlum 10 Ashford 11 Algeciras 12 Nasal 13/15 John Sergeant 18 Caution 19 Gondola 20 Mephisto 22 Iffy 25 Dildo 26 Imbroglio 28 Cheer up 29 Rushdie.

DOWN: 1 Cheapjack 2 Pong 3 Imprison 4 Caesar 5/24 Whingeing poms 6 Tossing off 7 Adult 14 House-flies 16 High Court 17 Easy money 19 Gaol-bird 21 Skimpy 23 Edict 27/9 Lady Luck.

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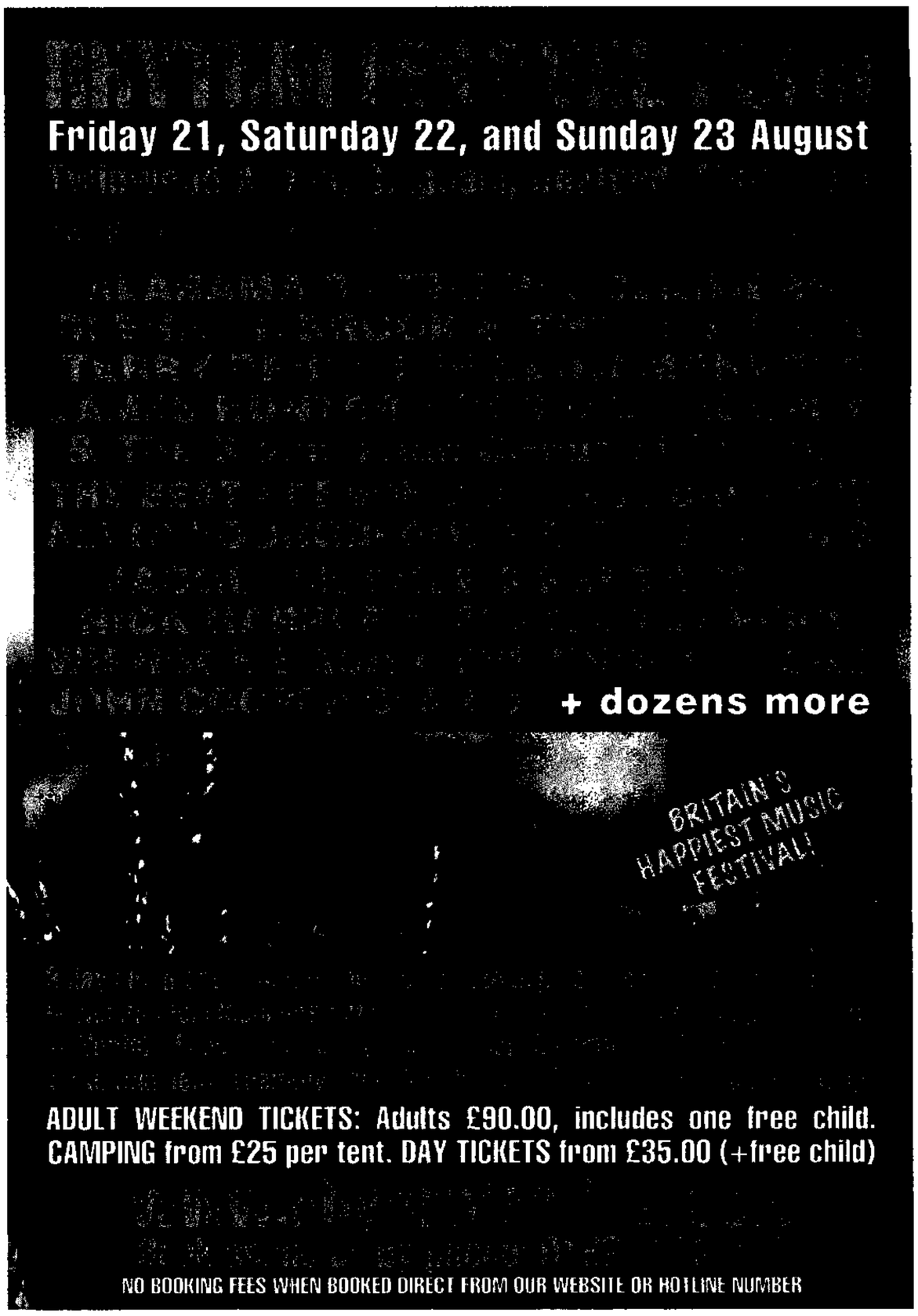
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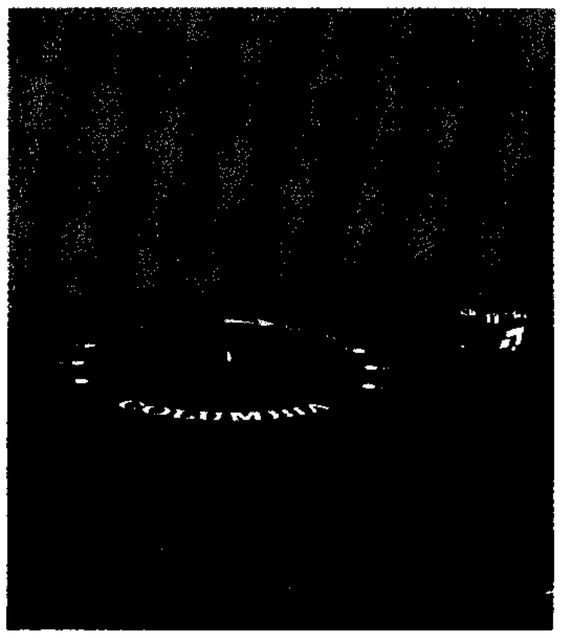

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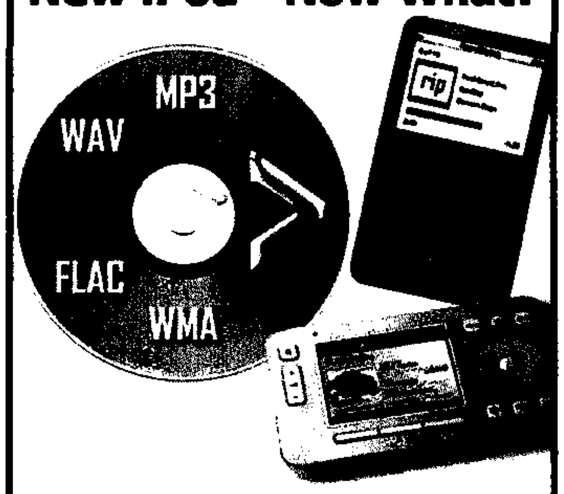

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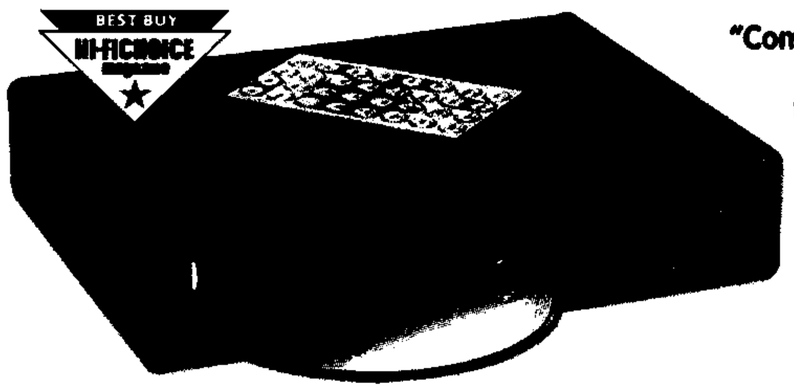

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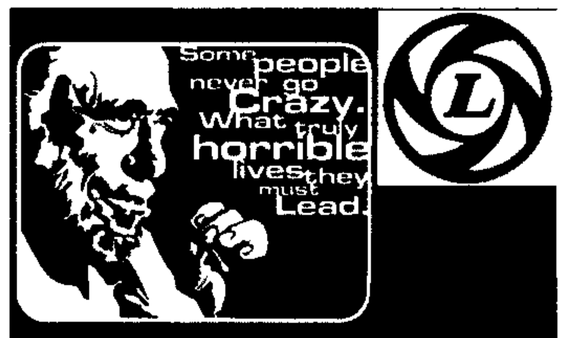

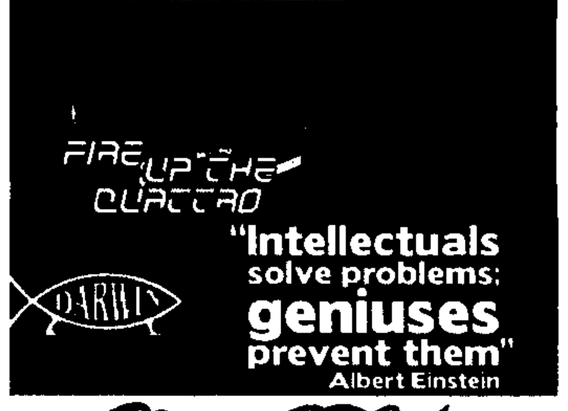

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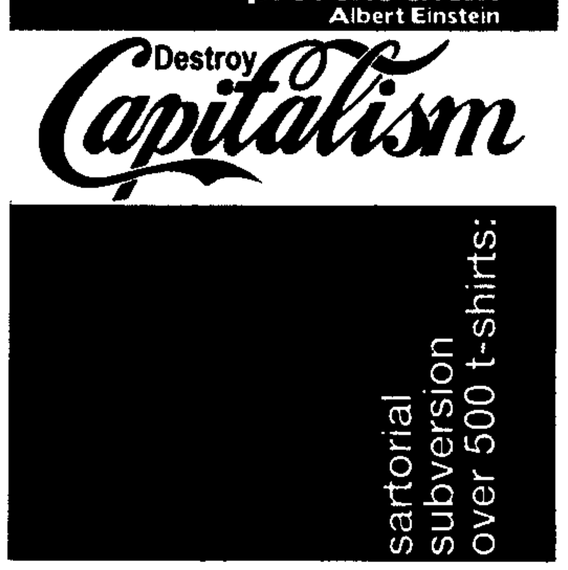

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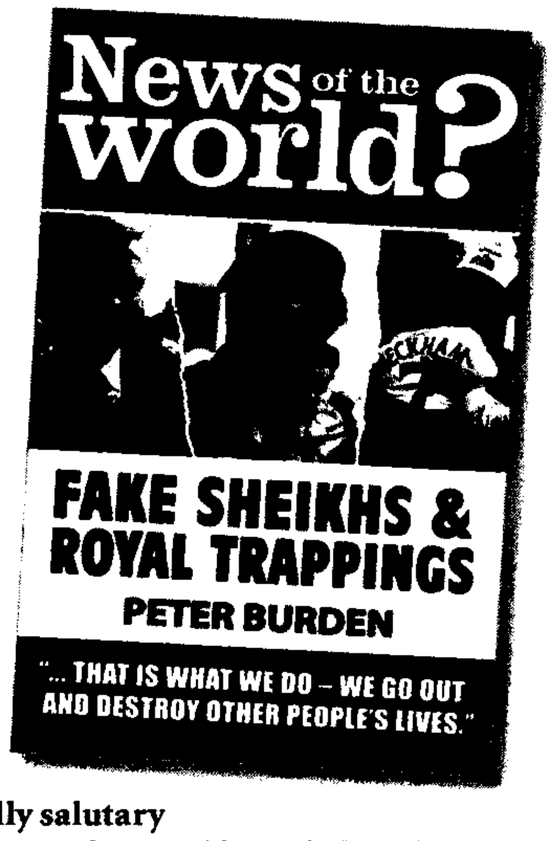

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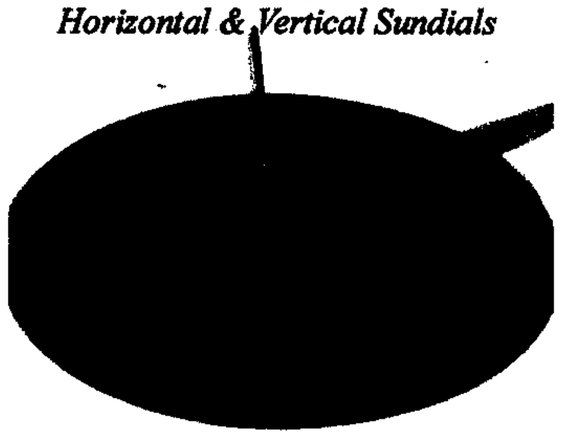

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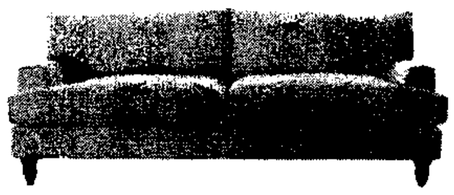

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